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Venerable Leonard Lessius, S.J.

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TORONTO

THE NAMES OF GOD

AND

MEDITATIVE SUMMARIES OF THE DIVINE PERFECTIONS

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BY

THE VENERABLE LEONARD LESSIUS, S.J.

TRANSLATED BY

T. J. CAMPBELL, S.J.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

IF we had remained in the state of innocence, meditation on divine things would have been easy. It would have been a constant delight to walk in the presence of God and to excite in the heart acts of faith, hope, charity, thanksgiving, humility, reverence, obedience and the like. In that happy state man enjoyed a very special assistance, which enabled him to know his Creator and to fulfil with the greatest joy all the duties that the various virtues enjoined. But when that blissful condition ceased in consequence of sin, this help was withdrawn, and our natural weakness made the contemplation of divine things irksome and the practice of virtue difficult. Earthly and material things now appeal to us powerfully and we readily give days to discuss and examine them. The wars and battles of history or fiction fascinate us, but we have to force ourselves to contemplate the things of heaven. The perfections or attributes of God are particularly difficult, and yet there is nothing more helpful to salvation, nor more agreeable and consoling when once we have made a little progress; none are more efficacious for the acquisition of virtue nor better calculated to clarify the mind and to throw

light on all the duties of life. For the Holy Scripture says: "To know Thee is perfect justice and to know Thy justice and Thy power is the root of immortality. (Wis. xv.)

Hence following the example of St. Denis the Areopagite whose works have for fifty years exercised on me a most marvellous charm, I have resolved to explain very briefly the divine perfections or attributes ascribed to God by the Holy Books. In this short exposition I omitted designedly the testimony of the Scriptures and the Fathers and also all theological proofs in order that the reader may more readily form a clear idea of these divine attributes, excite in his heart affections worthy of such sublime considerations and by this exercise, as St. Denis says, make his soul *"deiform,"* or like unto God.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

ALTHOUGH three hundred years have elapsed since the illustrious Leonard Lessius, S.J. wrote his treatise on "The Names of God," and in a series of "Meditative Summaries" condensed his great work on "The Divine Perfections," no English translation of either work has yet appeared. Some early versions in French and Flemish were published as far back as the seventeenth century, and Father Bouix, S.J., gave us his translation in French in 1882, but it is only now in 1912, that an effort is made to put this splendid spiritual book in the hands of English readers.

"The Names of God"—there are fifty in all—is the last work that Lessius ever wrote. Five or six days after he laid aside his manuscript the Angel of Death wrote *finis* on the story of the great man's life. The concluding chapter was fittingly entitled "God our Last End," and its closing paragraph reads as if he were gazing into the face of the Lord and expecting to be called to heaven. "During all eternity" he tells us, "all the angels and all the blessed will so rest in the vision, the love and the beatific vision of God that they will desire nothing more, but

will find in Him the term of all their desires and enjoy in Him a blessed repose."

This part of the book is made up of fifty chapters, most of them very brief, but all of them replete with the sublimest theology and furnishing a superabundance of matter for devout consideration.

"The Meditative Summaries" which constitute the second half of the work are the concluding chapters of his fifteen famous treatises on "The Divine Perfections." He calls them *"Recollectiones Precatoriæ."* Father Bouix who was evidently thinking of Bossuet and possibly making a mental comparison between the two men entitles them *"Elévations et Prières"* which is rather a free translation. "Meditative Summaries" we think more accurately describes their character, for they are like the *Colloquies* which St. Ignatius recommends us to make at the end of our meditations. They are in reality a succinct resumé of all the theology that had been elaborated and discussed in the previous disquisitions, combined with fervid outpourings of the heart in prayer, adoration and love. He seems to forget the presence of his students and addresses himself directly to Almighty God. Happy students to have had a teacher with the mind of a seer and the heart of a seraph.

On account of the sublime doctrines which he is expounding, the terminology is at times unavoidably technical. But this is true only of the opening chapters. Ordinarily his language is extremely simple and he never hesitates to repeat his expressions in order to make his meaning clear. Moreover what at first seems hard to understand clarifies itself as he proceeds and even where we are unable to follow him we cannot fail to contemplate with amazement the flight of his marvellously illumined intellect into the divine mysteries.

The few explanatory notes taken from the standard treatises of philosophy and theology and appended by the translator may contribute somewhat to a better understanding of the terms employed, but the main body of the work is within the reach of ordinary readers especially those who live in the light of the Sacraments.

The literary tone of the "Summaries" cannot fail to please. They are written in what rhetoricians call the cumulative style, which consists in piling up new thoughts and new aspects of things, each following closely on the other, and all hurrying onward to a sublime and splendid climax. It is like listening to the utterances of an inspired orator.

Lessius was one of the most illustrious the-

ologians of the Society of Jesus, the glory of the University of Louvain and the especial pride of Catholic Belgium. He was born at Brecht near Antwerp in 1554; at the time when the Protestant Reformation was in full blast; when Charles V reigned in Spain, Henry II in France and Mary Tudor in England. He was 12 years old when Philip II sent the Duke of Alva to the Netherlands.

He was only 17 when he entered the University of Louvain but his unusual ability won for him almost immediately both from masters and students the title of "Prince of Philosophers." Shortly after beginning his studies in the University, he entered the Society of Jesus which was then in the 37th year of its existence.

At 20 he was teaching philosophy at Douai and continued at that work for seven consecutive years. But philosophy alone was not sufficient to absorb his powers. He became a profound Hellenist and it is asserted by a grave historian that in two months time he mastered Greek so as to be able to converse in it. He was even then familiar with all the great thelogians, the Fathers of the Church and the notable writers on Holy Scripture. He was an authority in the oriental languages, canon and civil law, history and mathematics, and conversant with medicine, be-

sides speaking with facility several modern languages. All this was before he had reached his 27th year; so that there is small wonder he was an invalid for the rest of his life; but illness never made him work less.

When he was ordained he was sent to Rome where Suarez taught him for two years. It was this great master who emancipated him from an excessive anxiety about theological and philosophical authority. "In every question," he was told, "in which faith and morals are not involved, you are to follow your own opinion provided you can show that it is founded on reason. Such an utterance from an oracle like Suarez dissipated his fears and after that, says his biographer "the eagle took its flight."

From Rome he was recalled to Belgium to teach dogmatic theology at Louvain, and for thirty-eight years he was not only the pride of that University but one of the most brilliant theologians of his age. He was esteemed and praised by several great popes, and in 1587 when certain doctors of Louvain, probably prompted by Baius, took exception to some of his propositions, Sixtus V undertook his defense and sent a Nuncio to Belgium invested with the power of a legate *a latere* to declare in the name of the Pope that the propositions were absolutely in conformity with

sound doctrine. Such a pronouncement made the reputation of Lessius world-wide and the Universities of Mayence, Treves, Ingolstadt and Louvain hastened to declare in his favor. He was consulted by theologians from all parts of the world, and his word was law for them. Paul V thanked him publicly in Rome for his labors for the Church, and years afterwards when Lessius had gone to his reward Urban VIII said of him: "I knew Leonard Lessius perfectly. I was intimately associated with him in Rome and I have always held him in the highest regard on account of his extraordinary learning. But I esteemed him incomparably more for his virtue. He was a most humble man and endowed with unusual piety. I regard him as holding a high place in heaven."

When he was sent as Delegate to the 6th and 7th General Congregations of his Order, he was consulted by the learned men of every city through which he passed. He was called "The Oracle of the Low Countries." Prince Albert who then governed Belgium took him as his adviser, and in the Council Chamber had always before him on the table the treatise of Lessius *De Jure et Justitia.* Justus Lipsius the great literary man of the period died in his arms. Lipsius had left the faith but his friend won him back again to God.

The list of his works is enormous. The annotated catalogue of them fills several pages of the great folio edition of the *Bibliotheca Scriptorum S.J.* Among the translations of some parts of his works we find two by the famous Father Schall in Chinese and one in English by a timorous Briton who had undertaken the task at the command of Sir Walter Raleigh's ghost. The ghost declared that such a work would serve to check the growth of unbelief in England and would also exculpate the famous knight himself from the charge of infidelity.

His most important treatises are: 1. Justice and Right; 2. Faith; 3. The Providence of God; 4. Immortality of the Soul; 5. Efficacious Grace, the Divine Decrees, Free Will, Conditional Foreknowledge of God; 6. The Predestination and the Reprobation of Angels and Men—the Predestination of Christ; 7. The Sovereign Good; 8. The Divine Perfections; 9. The Power of the Roman Pontiff; 10. What Faith and Religion should be embraced; (This treatise St. Francis of Sales said was rather the work of the Angel of the Great Council than of Lessius. It brought back Prince John of Nassau and many other distinguished personages to the Church.) 11. Abstinence; 12. The Choice of a State of Life, and Celibacy; 13. The Names of God.

In the *Imago Primi Sæculi Societatis Jesu,* Lessius is described as follows: "His soul, greater than the world, was always turned towards God, so that on earth he seemed to lead the life of heaven. Taking but little nourishment and that only once a day, he was nevertheless constantly occupied in reading and writing on divine things. His countenance was resplendent with the light of sanctity."

He was particularly remarkable for his Christian patience. Though afflicted with bodily infirmities from his earliest youth, and suffering particularly in the four last years of his life, he never prayed for any alleviation of his pain. On the contrary he was continually thanking God for giving him a share of the cross. His only remedy was abstinence, and in that respect he was a source of astonishment to those who lived with him. His unusual intellectual powers which always seemed to be flooded with light enabled him to surmount his bodily suffering. Indeed it was while he was undergoing what amounted almost to martyrdom that he wrote his masterpieces. His friends regarded it as miraculous.

His writings reveal his soul, especially those on the Sovereign Good and the Divine Names. With St. Denis and St. Augustine he rises to the

contemplation of the Divinity and speaks of God as if his heart were on fire.

He died at Louvain January 15, 1623 at the age of sixty-nine. In Belgium and elsewhere he was regarded as a saint. He was buried before the main altar of the church of the Society in the Rue de Namur next to the college where he had labored for thirty-nine years. St. Michel, as it is called, is no longer a Jesuit church although it still bears on its façade and in the interior the emblems and statues of the saints of the Society. The present Jesuit establishment is in what used to be a somewhat mean street called the Rue des Recollets. Near the Scholasticate however in somewhat neighborly fashion is a dormitory erected by the University and named after the distinguished friend of Lessius, Justus Lipsius. Between the two buildings and in striking contrast, historically and otherwise, is the Tower of Jansenius where the *Augustinus* is said to have been written. Thirty-five years ago if memory serves us right there was a tradition in the Scholasticate, that the chair in the pulpit of the Professor of Dogma was the identical one used by Lessius in his time. Of course one may be skeptical on that score, for such a fragile article of furniture could scarcely have survived the storms through which the Society has passed

during the long period that intervened between then and now. Some years ago, the bones of the great man were carried over from the Rue de Namur to the Rue des Recollets and deposited in a marble tomb near the altar where the heart of St. John Berchmans is enshrined. Of that relic at least, there can be no doubt.

Immediately after his death, an ecclesiastical tribunal was instituted for an official inquiry into his life and virtues, with view to his canonization. The testimony taken at the time was deposited in the archives of the Archbishopric of Malines, but for a long time the process was interrupted on account of political upheaval, and only in our times has it been resumed.

It is superfluous to say that the works of such a man must be of great value not only to priests and religious, but also to people of the world who are desirous of knowing more than the mere rudiments of their religion. They ought also to be especially serviceable both for the Directors of retreats and for those who follow the Exercises. Indeed there is every reason why "The Meditative Summaries" on account of their devotional character might be used very profitably for visits to the Blessed Sacrament or even while assisting at Holy Mass.

We have used the Latin text as well as the

French translation of Bouix in preparing this English version. There was thus less danger of making the great man say what he never intended. The conciseness of his style contributed not a little to the difficulty of the task but we trust we have succeeded in making the translation coincide strictly with the meaning of the author. We commend the book in its new dress to the benignity of the reader.

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THE NAMES OF GOD

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CHAPTER I.

God and the Divinity.

Dionys. C I. de Div. Nom.;
De Myst. theol. C 3.

ST. DENIS tells us we can form an idea of God in two ways: affirmatively and negatively. The first is by positive concepts or by ascribing every possible perfection to God; the second by negative concepts, or by denying that any perfection conceivable by a created mind unillumined by the light of glory can be properly predicated of Him.

If we follow the first method we say, for instance that He is a spirit, most sovereignly exalted, good, great, eternal, powerful, wise, sweet, holy, just, merciful, beautiful; intimately present in all creatures, creating them, forming them, conserving them, governing them, and ordaining them to His glory, which is the first beginning and last end of all created things.

St. Augustine in his *Confessions* Bk. 1, c. 4, has given us such a description while adding some-

thing that partakes to a certain degree of the second method. "God is a spirit," he says, "sovereign and sovereignly good, great, and sempiternal; most powerful and most benign, most merciful and most just, most hidden and omnipresent, most strong and most beautiful, most simple and most perfect, indivisible and immeasurable, stable and incomprehensible; changeless, yet changing all things; always in action, yet ever in repose, amassing yet lacking naught; creating, nourishing, perfecting, upholding, completing and protecting all things; the Being from whom are all things; by whom are all things,, and for whom are all things."

St. Bernard in his book *De Consideratione* addressed to Pope Eugenius, asks: "What is God?" "God," he answers, "is an all powerful will, a sweet force, eternal light, immutable reason, sovereign beatitude; creating the soul to make it participate in Himself; vivifying it, to make it feel its Creator; in touch with it to make it long to come to Him; dilating it to make it receive Him; justifying it to enable it to merit; inflaming it to set it on fire with zeal; fecundating it to make it fruitful; leading it to justice; forming it to benevolence; moulding it to wisdom; visiting it to console it; illuminating it to increase its vision; guarding it for immortality; filling it to overflow-

ing with felicity, encompassing it for salvation." Here as elsewhere, St. Bernard describes God by attributing to Him all perfections. He follows the affirmative method.

An example of the negative method would be to say that God is a spirit, infinite, immense, sempiternal, infinitely above all perfection, all excellence and all greatness conceivable by a created mind. He is above all substance, all power, all wisdom, all intelligence, all light, all beauty, all sanctity, all justice, all goodness, all beatitude, all glory, so that nothing of these things can be properly predicated of Him. He is like none of them, but is infinitely more sublime and excellent than them all.

The reason of this is that all perfections conceivable by us or by the angels unaided by the light of glory are limited. Moreover they are not included in each other; and besides all perfections conceived by a created intelligence are conceived as accidental forms, such as are in created beings; whereas in God they are a most simple substance or a self-subsisting form.[1]

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[1] All Being is divided into substance and accident. *Substance* is that which exists *per se;* that is, which exists or subsists in itself; whereas an *accident* is that which inheres in another as in its subject. The primary element in the notion of substance is *subsistence.* Hence substance may be defined as a subsisting something that abides the same amid change of its

In many of his writings St. Denis seems to prefer the negative to the affirmative method. Instances of it may be found in Chapter II of *The Celestial Hierarchy,* Chapter I and II of *The Names of God,* and in Chapter III of *Mystic Theology.*

The two however, may be combined, as in the following description of the Divinity: "God is incomprehensible goodness in His essence, inscrutable depth in His wisdom, inaccessible height in His elevation; ineffable breadth in His love; infinite length in His eternity; superlative purity in His holiness; absolute immensity in His greatness, an obscurity most luminous, a solitude most peopled, and a simplicity most perfect. For Himself and for all the blessed He is paradise, heaven, eternal rest, eternal beatitude, and the infinite plenitude of all that is good."

Although in fact, as well as in the concept of those who have the vision of God, there is, in no

---

accidents. There are spiritual as well as material substances. The soul is a spiritual substance; angels are spiritual substances; and it is part of our faith that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity is of the same substance with the Father.

Substance, essence and *nature* severally denote the same object, but connote more especially different features. *Substance* points to the general fact of existence *per se; essence* to the reality of which the being is constituted; *nature* signifies the essence as a principle of vitality.

Stonyhurst Series Psychol.

way, any distinction between the Divinity and God, yet in our concept or in our manner of conceiving things, there is a distinction to be made. For we conceive the Divinity as the form, and God as the being resulting from form and substance.

We may conceive the Divinity in two ways: First as an infinite intellectual Essence or Nature from which flow in some way all those perfections which are called *attributes*. These attributes, however, are conceived not as formally contained in the Divinity or in the Divine Essence, but as being in the Divinity or Divine Essence as in their foundation. We conceive them as we do properties in created things.

Secondly, we may conceive the Divinity as a most simple self-subsisting form of infinite perfection, and containing formally all perfections in their highest degree, in such a way that God, by that form is formally powerful, wise, good, holy, just, etc.; nay is formally power itself, wisdom itself, goodness itself, holiness itself, justice itself; not accidental but substantial and self-subsistent. This manner of conceiving God is more elevated, more noble and more worthy of God as we have explained at length in Book 1, *De Perfect. divinis, c.* 1 and 3.

Reason and the testimony of the Holy Fathers

also show this; for conceived in this manner the Divine Essence contains formally all simple perfections, and is not considered merely as the basis or foundation of them. Moreover the perfections themselves are presented to us as substantial and not as accidental, or accessory things.[1]

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[1]Nowadays the word *form* usually signifies shape or figure, or something superficial as when we speak of formal observances, formalities, etc. In scholastic philosophy it signifies the active factor which determines the essential nature of each being. There are substantial forms and accidental forms. Substantial forms are the essential constituents of a thing. Accidental forms are mere accidental modes or determinations which conceivably might be removed without affecting the nature of the substance, *e. g.*, heat, color, etc.

When we say that God is *formally*, good, just, wise, etc., we mean that He is essentially so. When we say that He is *formal* justice, *formal* goodness, etc., we mean that He is justice itself, goodness itself, etc.—*Stonyhurst Series. Psychol.*

CHAPTER II.

He Who Is.

Dionys. de Div. Nom., 5;
St. Thos. I p. q. 13.

GOD is called *Being, He Who Is, Self-Existent,* in five ways or for five reasons.

First. Because He is the source and cause of all being; for all being comes from Him and depends on Him continually, as the light depends on the sun.

Second. Because His being is not limited. He is not this or that being, as an angel or a man is, but *He Is universally.* He comprises in Himself and anticipates every kind of being, from all eternity; for the whole plentitude, the whole latitude, and the whole amplitude of being is most fully and eminently contained in Him.

Third. Because *He Is eternally,* and because by His Being and by His life, He fills, equals, comprises and includes in Himself all eternity.

Fourth. Because *He Is limitlessly,* and fills the entire immensity of all imaginable space.

Fifth. Because *He Is immutably,* possessing everything simultaneously and securely in a way that He can never lose anything; for He possesses all things by His immutable Essence to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be withdrawn.

CHAPTER III.

The Infinite God.

Ps. cxliv., 3; Dionys. c. 9; St. Thos., 1 p. q. 7.

GOD is *infinite* in *His essence,* not only in some kind of perfection, as power, wisdom, holiness, justice, mercy, etc., but He is absolutely infinite in all kinds of perfection and consequently in the whole range of being.

First. As the fruitful *Cause* in which the whole amplitude of being eminently exists and which includes the infinite species of every genus; the infinite individuals of every species, and consequently whatever in the nature of being is conceivable by the intelligence of the angels and even by that of God.

That is why St. Gregory, of Nazianzen, in his *Oratio in Natalia* calls God the *immense ocean of being.* In it there are infinite worlds, infinite species of angels, one excelling the other, on and on through infinity; infinite nations of peoples, infinite species of animals, infinite natures and varieties of plants, of minerals and precious stones. There is an infinity of gold and silver; there are

infinite pearls of rarest size, and every description of precious stones. There are infinite species of colors, of paintings, of harmonies, of odors, of savors and delectable objects, of the flesh and the senses; infinite regions and cities, and fields and forests, and groves and gardens; infinite fountains and hills; infinite rivers and seas, infinite palaces and temples, infinite furnishings of every kind and of inestimable price. In it finally are contained an infinite abundance of all that the mind can conceive of precious and beautiful and splendid and delectable. All these things and an infinity of others that no created intellect can grasp, exist in the essence, wisdom, and omnipotence of God, and shine before His mind in such a manner that He can with a single sign of His will produce them outside of Himself in all conceivable multitudes and splendors.

Hence it follows that whoever possesses God possesses at the same time all those things and enjoys them in God in a most exalted manner.

Second. God is called *absolutely infinite,* because alone, by Himself He is infinitely more excellent, more grand, more beautiful, more lovable than all those infinite things which are contained eminently in His essence, His wisdom, His power. And even if God were to make them pass from nothing into being, He would

still be infinitely above them all. Nay all those things taken collectively and considered together, are but as nothing in comparison with the divine excellence. Hence he who possesses God, and rejoices in Him, enjoys by that possession alone a happiness incomparably greater than he would possess if outside of God he owned all that there is of beauty, splendor, glory and happiness. For God is all those things and infinitely more than all those things.

Third. From the fact that *God is infinite in His Essence,* it follows that He Himself is necessarily infinite in every kind of perfection that belongs to Him, namely, in greatness, power, wisdom, holiness, benignity, mercy, justice, beauty, etc. The reason is because such perfections can correspond to the Divine Essence only in an infinite perfection and degree; for they must be proportionate and equal to His Essence, from which, according to our manner of conceiving, they seem to flow. Secondly because these perfections are in God by a single and most simple form, which is absolutely infinite and unlimited. For they are not real properties proceeding from the Essence, but are the Divine self-subsisting Essence Itself, and consequently are a simple form of the Divinity which can be comprehended by us only imperfectly.

CHAPTER IV.

The God of Immensity.

Ps. cxliv; Baruch iii; Dionys. 9; St. Thos. i p. q. 8.

THIS name is given to the Almighty because of His greatness and for the want of a better word what we call His extension. He is extended and so to say, diffused everywhere; above, below, on the right, on the left, before and back of us. He is circumscribed by no limit and by no space. The mind contemplating this is lost in amazement. Were we to imagine an extent beyond the universe of a thousand leagues in every direction, God would still be there. Were we to add a million more, God would still be beyond them. Imagine it to extend as many millions of leagues as there are grains of sand on the shores of the sea, as drops of water in the ocean, or as there would be grains of dust to fill the whole universe, God is still by infinite millions of leagues beyond them all, and that most completely and perfectly, namely in the Three Persons, with all the perfections and the gifts and the riches which are eminently contained in Him.

Finally no human mind can conceive so vast an extent that God is not infinitely greater than it; and infinitely diffused without and beyond it; not merely in parts as the air and other material substances, but complete by Himself and if I may so speak in His *totalities,* as a spirit, so that He is entire in every point of all space; not, as it were, floating or mobile but most firmly and immovably and as the foundation of all things.

All the vastness of the universe compared to the magnitude and extension of God is like a little drop of water in comparison with the immensity of the ocean, or as a grain of dust in comparison with the vastness of the whole universe. Thus the Book of Wisdom (xi, 23) tells us: "The whole world before Thee is the least grain in the balance, and as a drop of the morning dew that falleth upon the earth." Or to speak more correctly there is no proportion between the magnitude and the extension of God and the magnitude and extension of the universe, for the magnitude of the extension of God not only infinitely exceeds the magnitude of the universe, but all magnitude conceivable by a created intelligence.

Nor does it matter that corporal and spiritual magnitudes admit of no comparison, for even if they cannot be compared in their nature they can be compared by reason of their extension as the-

ologians and philosophers generally admit when there is question of the soul and body, and of Angels, and the places adequate to them.

By reason of His immensity God is often called *great* in the Holy Scripture: "Of His greatness there is no end." (Ps. xlvii, lxxvi, lxxxviii). But this name belongs to Him also by reason of His other attributes, for He is great in power, great in wisdom, great in holiness, great in majesty and great in all His perfections. Also when in the Holy Scriptures He is called absolutely *great,* we must understand that He is great, infinite, immense according to all the perfections which belong to Him as we read in the xlvii Psalm which says: "Great is the Lord and exceedingly to be praised in the city of our God, in His holy mountains"; that is to say, He is great in power, in wisdom, in holiness, in justice and mercy. And in the xciv Psalm we are told to "praise the Lord, for the Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods." In the same way to be infinite, immense, eternal, unchangeable, immortal, incomprehensible, are things that belong to Him not merely by reason of His essence, but also according to all His attributes and personal prerogatives. This deserves our most serious consideration.

CHAPTER V.

The Most Pure God.

Job iv; Sap. vii, c. 7; St. Thos. i p. q. 3; St. Aug. II de Civit c. 10; lxv de Trin., c. 17.

SIMPLICITY is predicated of God, first, because in Him there are no parts either essential or accidental. He is not composed of body and soul like man, nor of matter and form like animals or plants, nor of integral parts as are all corporeal things, whether substances or accidents. There is in Him no compound of subject and accidental form, as in all created substances even angels, who nevertheless excel all other creatures in the simplicity of their nature. Nor is there any composition of mode and of things modified, as in all created things both substantial and accidental. For as they are all limited and imperfect they stand in need of divers modes which limit them intrinsically or unite them with other beings to help them to attain the perfection or state which is their due.

In fact all bodies and all accidental corporeal things in the world have a certain mode of extension, of density or tenuousness, of limitations ac-

cording to their quantity or shape or the place they occupy in space. All spiritual substances and their accidental forms are defined and enclosed in a certain space beyond which they cannot extend and within which they can contract in an infinite variety of ways. All forms both substantial and accidental possess a certain mode of inhering to, uniting with, and informing the subject to which they belong. All subjects likewise are united with their forms and accidents, and all the parts of a continuous thing possess a certain mode of union with each other.

In the same way all the degrees of forms which increase or decrease in intensity enjoy a mutual union by means of a certain intimate and reciprocal penetration and cohesion.

According to these various modes numberless changes are daily being wrought which result in the subject presenting itself ceaselessly under different aspects.

Now God is incapable of all this, for the reason that He is absolutely without limitation, is supremely perfect in all respects and is infinitely exalted above them all to such a degree that He can not be affected or touched by any created thing.

Second. God is called *simple* not only because He is exempt from anything compound in His nature, but still more so because He is infinitely

pure, subtile and spiritual, and by His purity is infinitely above all that is corporeal or spiritual. For the more pure and spiritual a thing is the more simple it is. Hence just as the elements, as many think, have no component parts and in that respect are equally simple in their nature, yet when we examine their purity one is found to be more simple that the other; water more simple than earth, the heavens purer and simpler than the elements. Hence as the Divine Essence is of infinite sublimity and purity (for it is a Pure Act infinitely elevated in its character not only above all corporeal substances but above all spirits that are or can be created)[1] it is to be rightfully regarded as infinitely simple, so that all the Angelic spirits compared to Him do not seem to be spirits at all but coarse natures, impure and concrete like bodies. By reason of this subtility and simplicity God's essence can penetrate and pervade everything, be intimately present to them interiorly and unseen, creating, forming, preserving,

[1]When we speak of God as a *Pure Act* we mean that there is not in God any capacity or potency of being other than He is. Such capacity or potency would imply a defect in an infinitely perfect being which is a contradiction in terms. It would also suppose a possibility of change in a being who is essentially immutable. St. James I, 17 expresses is thus: "Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no change nor shadow of alteration."—*Hurter Theol.*

perfecting and holding all creatures and cooperating with them all in a way that is absolutely hidden from observation.

By reason of this simplicity God is infinitely more perfect and more excellent than if he possessed all perfections in different forms, compounded and united with each other; for it is infinitely more perfect and more excellent and more sublime to possess all perfections by a single form than to posses them by different forms. For these different forms are really limited to their own species. Hence it follows that they could not constitute the Divinity or be the Deity itself. But that form which in its supreme simplicity contains all perfections, is necessarily limitless and infinite. It is Being by itself, *a se,* and consequently is the Divinity itself.

CHAPTER VI.

The Eternal God.

Gen. xxi; Exod. xv; Ps. xlvii, xlviii, lx, lxxi; Dionys. c. 10; St. Thos. i p. q. 10; Aug. in Ps. ci; Boet. i. 5 de Consol.

GOD is called *Eternal* because He existed an infinity of ages before all imaginable time, and because He will exist an infinity of ages after all imaginable time.

Let us go back in thought before the creation of the world as many myriads of ages, (and by ages I mean centuries) as there are grains of sand on every shore of every sea, as there are drops in all the seas and lakes and rivers of the earth, as there are leaves on all its trees and blades of grass in all its meadows, or seeds in all its fields, or hairs on the furs of all the animals of the world, and to this inconceivable number let us add as many millions of ages as would be represented by grains of dust that would be necessary to fill the universe, and although such an inconceivable lapse of time would itself seem an eternity yet God would have preceded it by millions of ages.

Let us go still further. Let an angel with all his intellectual power multiply all this vast number of ages, going ever higher and higher by

squaring and cubing these numbers and keep on combining them for thousands of years, at infinite distances and infinite ages from each other: God would still be prior to and older than them all. The same must be said even if all these multiplications and squarings and cubings constantly mounted upwards in a straight line as many times as there would be grains of dust enough to fill the universe. But no number of years or centuries can be conceived by a created mind as going backward into the past without having some term from which they start, yet prior to that term there were infinite ages in which God preceded it. Hence He is called the Ancient of Days (Dan. vii) and The First and The Last (Apoc. i).

In the same way are we to conceive the eternity of the future. Imagine in the future as many millions of ages as we have just now assigned. When they are all completed, there will still be millions of ages to come and infinite ages in which God will reign with His saints and in which the reprobate will suffer in hell. No created mind can conceive so great an extent of time which would not when it is over suppose an infinite multitude of ages to follow after.

Here it must be remembered that the whole of eternity, in as much as it expresses a certain

extent of duration, is, in our manner of conceiving it, composed of two parts, although of itself it is one and indivisible. We conceive one of these parts as existing prior to all imaginable time: as being always past. That belongs to God alone, and in my opinion could not belong to any creature, as we have proved elsewhere from the Fathers (Lib. iv de Perf. Div., c. 2). The other part is conceived as existing after all imaginable ages, as always future, and in such a way that we can take nothing from it to diminish it. That future can be communicated to creatures, for it is thus that the renovated world, the beatitude of the saints and the torments of the reprobate will be eternal.

Second. God is called *eternal* not only because before all conceivable time He has existed for infinite ages and because after all conceivable time He will continue to exist for infinite ages, but still more because He possesses in a most perfect manner both simultaneously and collectively all good, all power, all wisdom, all beatitude, all joy and delight that could be acquired during an infinite period, and He possesses them immutably from all eternity and for all eternity, without any beginning and without any end, and in such a way that nothing can be added and nothing taken away. No one in this world could possess col-

lectively all the honors and all the happiness which he is capable of enjoying in the whole course of his life in a way to feel, perceive and enjoy them simultaneously. Nor could he support them all at the same time. He would die with excess of joy, for his heart would break. Examples of death from too much joy are not rare. But God possesses all the joys which He can receive from infinite possessions for an infinite period simultaneously and collectively for all eternity.

Hence the joy of God is infinite in three ways. First, because its object is an infinite good, namely the excellency of His Being. Over and above that, it has for its object the infinite goods that are eminently contained in the Divine Essence. Secondly, because He possesses simultaneously and collectively all the joy that He could receive successively during an infinite period. Thirdly, because He possesses all this, not for a limited time but during all eternity.

It is as if there were a material light infinite in intensity and extent, capable of having all the perfection that would be expended at every instant of its duration, all concentrated on one single point, and yet although thus concentrated, would be diffused through vast spaces and be everywhere in all its entirety and in all its perfection.

In the same way, God from all eternity simultaneously and immutably conceives and retains all His thoughts, all His counsels, all His decrees in such a way that nothing new can come to Him. He cannot think or wish or decree what He has not already thought and wished and decreed from all eternity, because for all things and for each in particular, an eternal decree must have preceded, and without such a decree nothing can be done in time. This does not mean that absolutely speaking, God could not have made other things than those He has made, or is to make. Far from us be such a thought; for He has the power to make others without end, although in reality He has not decreed to make them. Nevertheless it is impossible that in reality He should make anything which He has not from all eternity decreed to make. Therefore He can absolutely do all things, if we consider His power, wisdom and sovereign liberty to formulate from all eternity such decrees as it pleases Him to do but He cannot do all things, in the hypothesis or the supposition that there had not been on His part an antecedent decree. It belongs to the eminent perfection of His eternity and to the immutability of His eternal grandeur to have considered, examined and weighed in His infinite light all possible things, both those which

will be done in time and those which will not be done; all as exactly and as perfectly as if He had weighed and considered each in particular during an infinite period. Hence there is no reason why He could not decree simultaneously and at one time with regard to all things and to each in particular, determining what should be done or permitted at some infinite period afterwards. Indeed that is necessary in order that His will with regard to certain objects should not, so to speak, be held in suspense. That would be an imperfection.

Hence there is no succession of acts or of understanding or of will in God. What He thinks and sees, He thinks and sees always. Whom He loves once, He loves always, but He loves him for that time in which he is loveable, namely as long as he is in a state of grace. Whom He hates once He hates always, not however absolutely, but only for the time that such a one is worthy of hatred; for when the reason for hatred is removed the person becomes an object of love. These acts which according to our manner of conceiving them exist in God from all eternity do not properly speaking cease to be; nor do they spring up again, nor are they formed anew, but they remain invariable with regard to their object according as it is considered for a certain time

and in a certain state, and they are not called absolute except in such time as the objects exist in a certain state, and for the time during which they will exist or have existed in that state.

Third. God is called *Eternal,* for the reason that He is above eternity, and is the cause of eternity in creatures. For through that omnipotent, continual and unchangeable influence He creates and preserves all things. He is the cause of the continuance in existence of the world, the angels and men, and He is the cause of the state of glory and the state of damnation. Finally all things have received from Him their duration, their limit of age, their span of existence, their length of life, their time of birth, their time of death, each according to its nature and condition.

CHAPTER VII.

The Most High God.

Gen. xiv; Num. xxiv; Job iii.

GOD is called *the Most High* because He is the cause of all sublimity or elevation in creatures, whether it be of local altitude as when we speak of the high heavens, or official prominence like that of kings and princes or prelates; or superiority of nature such as the angels possess over corporeal substances, or the perfection of state like that of the elect, of the Blessed Virgin, or of the Sacred Humanity of Christ. It is God who regulates, adjusts, and bestows all this exaltedness and superiority. He arranges in exquisite order all the visible and invisible parts of the universe.

Second. He is called *The Most High* because He alone is really sublime and exalted, for all elevation or sublimity in created things is, when compared to His, no elevation at all, but only an image and a shadow of it. In effect all the kings and princes of the world, and all the angels and blessed are, of their very nature, His servants and slaves; even if by His love and the communication of His Spirit He has adopted them and calls them His children.

Third. God is justly called *The Most High*, because by His Essence and all His perfections, He is infinitely above all creatures, not only those that actually exist, but those that are possible or conceivable, no matter how exalted, or mighty, or wise, or great, or beautiful, or happy they may be imagined to be. Hence it follows that God is called *The Most High* not only because He is above all creatures, but because He is *infinitely* above them; in such a manner that between the most exalted creature existing, and God, there are infinite grades of angelic species rising higher and higher towards Him. The same must be said of the degrees of beatitude. Hence every creature no matter how exalted, is, if I may say so, placed at an infinite distance beneath Him, although in the same space. Hence between the creature and God Himself there is an infinite distance; not of place but of nature or degree. The mystics call this the *Solitude of God.*

CHAPTER VIII.

The Immutable God.

Ps. ci; Malach. iii; James i.

GOD is called *Immutable,* first, because all permanency and all immutability in created things is derived from Him. It is He who will keep forever this whole universe in its place and in the state of glory which the divine power will invest it with after the universal judgment. In the same way He will keep the angels and men in their state of glory or their state of damnation.

Second. God is called *Immutable,* because in Him there cannot be the slightest diminution or increase; neither in His substance, nor power, nor perfection, nor understanding, nor will, nor place, nor situation, nor in any mode of being whatsoever. If all men and all angels and the entire universe and all created things should perish He would lose nothing in Himself. The plenitude of His joy and of His felicity and the affluence of every good would be always the same in Him. For He holds all things ever present in the light of His supreme wisdom and in the om-

nipotence of His might. Nor can there be any change in His manner of possessing them, nor can any creature evade His control. At the least sign on His part all things would exist anew in their respective natures and serve Him as before. Hence it follows, that the destruction of all things would cause Him no loss. As the Royal Prophet says: "When the wicked shall spring up as grass, and all the workers of iniquity shall appear, that they may perish for ever and ever, but Thou, O Lord, art most high forever more." (Ps. xci.)

The reason of this immutability of God is that all He has or can have, He has actually by His Essence. Hence there can be in Him no diminution or increase, unless that Essence should in some manner vary. But it admits no change, for it is infinitely exalted above all that is subject to change.

CHAPTER IX.

The Immortal God.

I Tim., i, vi.

GOD is called *Immortal,* first, because being a simple substance which is self-subsisting, He cannot in any manner perish by dissolution, as man who ceases to live when his soul is separated from his body. Nevertheless this immortality is common to God and to all self-subsisting simple substances. Because they are simple, they cannot perish by a division into the parts of their nature, and being self-subsistent they do not depend on any subject whose death or alteration must cause them to perish; as happens for instance with the souls or lives of animals and plants, when the body is destroyed. Being separated from their subjects they cannot perform any function and consequently conservation is not due them.

God is properly called *Immortal* because He is by His nature, such that He cannot in any manner cease to be, whereas all other beings without exception are so constituted that they can lose their life, their nature and all that they are. Hence in

the epistle to Timothy, St. Paul says in speaking of God: *"He alone has immortality."*

The reason is that God being the First and Supreme Being, and the foundation of all beings can in no manner be dependent on any other being whatever, and consequently He cannot cease to be, or lose His existence by the withdrawal of the influence or the support of any cause.

Hence God is, by His nature, absolutely and in every way immortal. But all creatures, even the angels and the blessed whose nature and life seem to be especially immortal, depend by their nature on the continual influence of God, by whom they were created, formed and preserved with all their natural or beatified life; and they are by the condition of their nature such, that they may lose both of these lives and cease to be, if it so happened that God who of His free will preserves them, withdraws his concurrence.

Thus although the scholastic philosophers and theologians teach that the angels are absolutely immortal in their nature, because they have nothing in them that can cause their extinction, and because no created thing can make them perish, for their natures are simple, they are nevertheless said by the Holy Fathers to be, of their nature, mortal, and only by the goodness and grace of God, immortal. However by grace is meant

in this instance, a free and gratuitous influence of God, by which He preserves their nature; and as this grace is a preservative of their nature it was not called supernatural but natural. It was gratuitous because it did not come from the merits of the recipients but was purely a gift like creation. Hence the angels when compared to other creatures in general are called immortal; but when compared to God they are sometimes described as mortal.

Third. God is called *Immortal* because He is absolutely unchangeable. Not only He cannot lose His existence but cannot lose anything that is in Him. Nothing can be taken from His majesty, nor from His greatness, nor glory, nor beatitude, nor wisdom, nor peace, nor tranquillity, nor from the superabundance of whatever good He possesses. Nor can His counsels or decrees be changed. For any change whatever would imply that He had ceased to be immortal in everything. The reason is that, in every change in which something is lost, there intervenes a sort of death with regard to that particular thing which is taken away.

CHAPTER X.

The Invisible God.

Exod. xxxiii; I Tim. i; John i.

THE Apostle joins the *Invisibility* of God to his Immortality when he says: "Now to the King of ages immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen."

God is called *Invisible,* first, because He cannot be seen as He is in Himself, by the eyes of the body; for what is altogether spiritual cannot be the object of bodily sight.

Second. God is called *Invisible* because no created intellect, by its own natural light, can see Him clearly as He is in Himself; nor is there any possible intelligence which could see Him by its natural powers. Thus He is invisible to all creatures and can be seen and known only by Himself. It is in this sense that the Apostle calls God *Invisible.*

Third. He is called *Invisible* because although in some manner He may be seen clearly by a created spirit aided by the light of glory, He cannot be seen comprehensively, namely in such a

way that nothing escapes the one who sees. For every vision of the blessed is infinitely removed from the comprehensive vision of God, and God transcends infinitely all that they can see. In that sense some of the Fathers say that God is invisible and unknown to all creatures, and that He alone can see and know Himself as He is.

CHAPTER XI.

The Incomprehensible God.

Job. ix; Jer. xxxii; Rom. ii.

GOD is called *Incomprehensible* for four reasons: First, He is *Incomprehensible to the understanding,* because no creature even with the light of glory, no matter how great the illumination may be, can comprehend Him; that is to say, can know Him in such a way that nothing escapes the one who contemplates or knows Him. For there will always remain an infinity of things which will not be distinctly known or conceived. There will be an infinite number of conceptions of things, there will be an infinity of complacencies in possible things, an infinity of decrees, especially of conditioned decrees and an infinity of modes in which the Divine Essence is imitable. And even if a created spirit should see all those things distinctly in God by means of some elevated degree of glory, such as that which is in the soul of Christ (a thing however which is absolutely impossible), nevertheless God would not be properly and perfectly known by that spirit, because such knowledge would not in its clearness equal the Divine Essence and would never succeed in know-

ing God as perfectly and as clearly as He can be known. It would remain infinitely below that requisite clearness for the reason that it is essentially finite. Hence it follows that such knowledge would not be equal to God's and could never perfectly comprehend Him. It would comprehend Him only in part, that is to say, according to the multitude of objects known and not according to the clearness and perfection of knowledge.

God is also *Incomprehensible to the understanding,* in this sense, that no created understanding, no matter how exalted, can by the powers of its nature attain to Him in such a manner as to see Him clearly and know Him as He is. Let thought soar as high as it may, it will be always infinitely removed from the clear knowledge of God's Being.

Second. God is *Incomprehensible to the will and to the heart,* because no spirit can love, honor, esteem, praise or revere Him as much as He deserves. He is infinitely above all the love, honor, esteem, praise and reverence that any and every creature might pay Him, even of all the blessed taken collectively. (Eccl. xliii 30, et seq.)

Third. He is *Incomprehensible relatively to space,* because being Immense He cannot be confined to any space no matter how vast.

Fourth. He is *Incomprehensible with regard to time,* because being Eternal, He is before all conceivable duration, He precedes it by an infinity of ages, and there still remains an infinity of ages after any duration that the mind can conceive.

CHAPTER XII.

The Ineffable God.

Jer. xxxii; Eccl. xliii; John xi; xii; Tim. vi.

GOD is called *Ineffable,* first, because there is no word nor speech that can describe Him as He is in Himself, even if one should write as many books as would fill the whole world.

Second. Because not only is it impossible to speak of Him by words of the lips, but no created spirit can without the light of glory conceive Him such as He is, and hence cannot represent Him even by mental words. For every conception by which a created spirit can represent God to itself without the help of the light of glory, is infinitely removed from the truth. Hence it follows that a single word by which the blessed represent and express God in their mind, is infinitely superior to all the wisdom of men and angels. Thus God is not ineffable to the blessed, but He is to men and angels outside of the state of beatitude.

Third. God is called *Ineffable,* because He is so sublime, infinite and immense, that even with the light of glory, the blessed cannot by any

mental word represent Him to themselves or speak of Him in an adequate and comprehensive manner. That belongs to Him alone. In that way He is ineffable even to the blessed.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Almighty God.

Gen. xvii; Exod. xv; Tob. xiii; Job. viii.

GOD is called Omnipotent or Almighty, first, in as much as He is the *Cause* from which are all power, all virtue, all energy, all vigor and all efficiency in the whole of creation: on the earth, in the sea, in the stars, in the stones, in the metals, in the plants, in the minerals, in man and in angels. All power to do anything be it ever so insignificant is but a slight participation in the power of God.

Second. God is *formally Omnipotent* because He possesses infinite power; or rather He is infinite self-subsisting power itself. He can do all things that a created spirit can conceive; and such things are infinite in their genus and species. For instance one can conceive infinite worlds like ours, and others unlike it; an infinity of angels, an infinity of peoples, an infinity of metals, gold, silver etc., an infinity of precious stones and so on.

When we say that God can make an infinite

number of things we must understand it in this sense, viz: that whatever may be the number of things of every kind that He has created, He can still create others without end; so that no created mind can conceive a number of things so great that God can not make as many more, endlessly. However He could not create things that would be actually infinite. Such is the more probable opinion of St. Thomas and of many others. For a creature cannot be actually infinite as we have elsewhere demonstrated.

Moreover God can not only do what no created mind can conceive, and He can do so in any number, quantity and perfection whatever, but He can also do whatever His infinite wisdom can conceive, either outside or within Himself, and such things would be infinitely greater and more marvellous than anything a created mind could conceive. For all things that His infinite mind can conceive or form interiorly by knowing, He can produce and form outside of Himself. In that way His power equals His wisdom.

Third. He is called Almighty because He can make all things instantly, without delay, without effort, with supreme and infinite facility, by a single sign of His will, by a single word. It would be incomparably more easy for Him to create a thousand new worlds than for us to pro-

nounce the word "world"; and could there be anything easier than that?

Fourth. He is called Almighty or rather "He who holdeth all things"; because He holds in His hand all things, and each in particular in its innermost nature. He binds them in their unity lest they should dissolve and fade away. He is the basis and foundation that holds, sustains and conserves. For He is the root of all things, from which all being springs with an ineffable fecundity. He is the bond, the link of all things, holding them together in their several unities lest they dissolve and disappear. He is the basis and foundation of all, sustaining them and preventing them from falling back into their own nothingness.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Most Wise God.

Prov. I iii, ix; Wis. vii, viii; Math. ii; Luke vii; Dionys c. 7, de Divin. Nom.; St. Thos. I p. q. 14.

GOD is called *Wise* and *Wisdom* for the reason, first, that He is the cause of all wisdom, and all knowledge whether little or great in the blessed, in the angels, in man and even in the animals; for from His wisdom everything emanates, down to that slight amount of knowledge which the instinct in animals reveals.

Second. God is called *formally Wise,* not because He is endowed and imbued with wisdom as the angels are, but because He is self-subsisting Wisdom in which is eminently contained the plenitude of all wisdom. By that *Wisdom,* from the first moment of its activity, if one may so speak, He comprehends with infinite clarity His own Essence, the procession of Persons in the most Holy Trinity, as well as the Persons themselves. Then, in the second instant, from all eternity and through all eternity, He directs His gaze with infinite clearness on all things possible,

doing so by the power of the knowledge of His own Essence. In the third instant, His gaze embraces all that can be done by any created or creatable power. In the fourth instant, He looks out upon all that might be done in every possible hypothesis, namely on what are called *conditional futures,* and they are infinitely infinite, for the circumstances of each of the things that depend on free will may vary infinitely, and each of these things may be done in an infinite variety of ways. In the fifth instant, He sees in an absolute manner all future things during all eternity with all their attendant circumstances.

Third. God is called *Wise,* because He is so in a very special and eminent way which cannot be communicated to any creature. For as two things are necessary for wisdom, viz: the light to know and the object known, He has of Himself both one and the other in an eminent degree, and in infinite perfection. In effect, He is Himself the infinite self-subsisting light of intelligence, and He is Himself and by Himself every intelligible object, or contains it in Himself eminently. He does not need to borrow from any one either the light of intelligence or the object which is understood by the intelligence.

CHAPTER XV.

The Beautiful God.

Dionys. c. 4 de Nom. Div; Cant. i, xv; Wis. cxiii, 3.

GOD is called *Beautiful,* first, because He is the source of all beauty of the angels and men; of the heavens, the elements, the animals, plants, pearls, precious stones and all other created things. All their beauty and attractiveness, both internal and external, that which appeals to the senses as well as that which delights the intelligence have been received by them, through Him and from His wisdom.

There are seven degrees of beauty. The first is the external beauty that we see with our eyes, in the flowers or precious stones, in the appearance or form of animals, and of men and women; in the stars, the sun and the moon. This is the beauty that mortals admire so much and which exercises such a fascination on them and prompts them to pursue it.

The second degree is the interior beauty of those forms from which exterior beauty proceeds. This interior beauty is incomparably greater and

more admirable because in a simple form and in a simple power there is contained in an ineffable manner all the variety which appears externally in the flowers, in the plants, in the structure of animals, in colors and figures and in all other things. Thus in the virtue of the seed is contained the whole structure, the figures and the colors of plants, animals, etc.

The third degree of beauty is found in the lives of animals or in what are called sentient souls. In that simple form is contained the power of the senses, the power of the imagination and the power of the sensitive appetite. All these things are so admirable that the human soul cannot comprehend the hundredth part of them. The sensitive or sentient soul is so far above the vegetative that there is more beauty in one single sentient soul than in all vegetative souls together.

The fourth degree of beauty is that of the rational soul which is incomparably more beautiful than all sentient souls taken together.

The fifth degree is in the angelic nature which is incomparably more beautiful than the rational soul.

The sixth degree is that of the inhabitants of heaven whose beauty surpasses that of the whole universe, even if that beauty were all united in its entirety under one form.

The seventh degree is that of the Divine beauty in which all the natural and supernatural, all the spiritual and corporeal beauty of all created or creatable beings is most eminently and most unitedly contained. All of this, however, is as nothing in comparison with the beauty of God. For that reason, the sight of the divine beauty will ravish and transport the inhabitants of heaven incomparably more than the sight of the glory of the saints, of the whole celestial court and of all the universe, although they also must be a source of inconceivable delight.

Second. God is called *Beautiful,* because He is Himself formally infinite Beauty surpassing infinitely all created or creatable beauty, and everything else that the divine intelligence could conceive outside of itself. It follows from this, that He is infinitely lovable, an infinite source of delight, and has an infinite power of drawing the spirit to love Him; and although in reality He does not attract infinitely the spirits of the blessed, because their vision has not an infinite perfection, yet He attracts them with such a power that they all, of necessity love Him, and cannot in any manner suspend or arrest their love; and the greater the necessity of loving God there is in the inhabitants of heaven, the greater is their happiness.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Good God.

Dionys. 4, 5, 13.

GOD is called *Good,* first, because He is the source of all good. From Him comes all that men and angels and the whole universe possess in the realms of nature, grace, and glory; and all created good is but a slight participation, a little spark of the Infinite Good. He is the author of every essential perfection that makes a thing be called good in itself, and also of every proportion and congruity that renders a thing good for that to which it is adapted.

Second. God is called *Good formally,* because in Him is the plenitude of every good that a created spirit can conceive, so that no one can imagine any good or any perfection which is not contained in Him in a supreme degree and in infinite excess.

In Him there is an infinite light, an infinite power, an infinite wisdom, an infinite beauty, an infinite sweetness, an infinite joy, an infinite glory, an infinite beatitude, an infinite holiness, an infinite justice, and an infinite mercy. More than that, He is Himself all these things in the most

simple and sublime manner by His absolutely simple Essence.

Third. God is called *The Supreme Good,* because He is so transcendentally good that He is infinitely above all good that a created mind can conceive, and yet He is like to none of these things, so that all conceivable goodness should be rather denied than affirmed of Him.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Holy God.

Isaias vi; Levit. ii, 19, 20 et seq., Dionys. c. 12.

GOD is called *Holy,* first, as the cause and source of all holiness that can be found in men and angels; for all holiness comes from Him as from an infinite fountain of purity and holiness.

Second. He is called *Holy,* in as much as He is the object and measure of all holiness. As He is Himself infinite purity, and as He is infinitely spiritual, the more we approach Him by knowledge and love, the more we advance in holiness; for, to know and love Him and to cleave to Him by sincerest love is that genuine, formal or essential holiness by which every spirit is formally sanctified and is called holy.

Third. He is called *Holy,* not only in as much as He is the object of all holiness or, in other words, *objective* holiness, but still more because He is formally holy or is *formal* holiness. For as true holiness consists in the knowledge, love and enjoyment of God, and as He knows Himself

infinitely, and loves Himself infinitely, it is clear that His holiness is infinite, and that He is infinitely holy. Nay more, He is Himself infinite holiness because He is the infinite knowledge, love and enjoyment of Himself.

Fourth. He is called *Holy* because all that belongs to the essence of holiness, He has of Himself, and with an infinite perfection. Two things are required for holiness; love and the object, or the purity of the object. Now God possesses both by Himself. He is the infinite love of Himself. He is the object of infinite purity in that love in which formal sanctity consists. He is thus infinite holiness, both formal and objective and He is by His Essence, *the measure of all holiness;* of His own, of that of the angels, and of men. He is by the love of Himself formally holy; He is holiness itself and is the source of holiness.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Merciful God.

James v; Ps. lxxxv, cii, cx, cxliv; Dionys. c. 4, 5; St. Thos. I p. q. 21.

GOD is called *Merciful,* first, because He is the source of all mercy and of every merciful prompting in men and angels.

Second. Because in so far as depends on Him, He is ready to save the whole human race which had lapsed from eternal salvation into eternal misery. He is ready not only to free it from that misery but to restore it to eternal happiness. For that He has paid a price more than sufficient, and besides He has, in effect, delivered from eternal misery an infinite multitude of souls whom He has enabled to attain to the enjoyment of the infinite and eternal good.

Third. Nor has He done this in an easy manner, as when He created the world or when He conferred beatitude on the angelic nature, but at the cost of labors, pains and immense sacrifices, humbling Himself by assuming the baseness and infirmity of human nature; embracing poverty and want, and countless miseries and afflictions,

anguish and toil; submitting to shameful outrages, buffets and scourgings; permitting Himself to be spat upon, and accepting the cross, and the cruelest kind of death; and finally delivering Himself up to us under the species of bread and wine in the most holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. All that He has done out of His infinite mercy to lift us out of infinite evil and raise us up to infinite good.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Just God.

Ps. x, cxi, cxliv; Isaias xxiv, lxii; Jer. xxiii, xxxiii; Dan. iii, ix; II Tim. iv; Dionys. c. 8; St. Thos. I p. q. 21.

GOD is called *Just,* first, because He is the *source* and cause of all justice; for all the justice, all the rectitude, and all the holiness of angels and of men emanates from Him as a feeble ray and as an image of that Justice which towers infinitely above all created justice.

Second. God is *Just formally,* for as supreme justice consists in the love of God, which makes us conformable in the highest degree to the eternal law, and as God is the most perfect and sublime love of Himself, it follows necessarily that He is *Formal Justice,* most sublime and most complete. He is infinitely perfect Justice and infinitely above all the justice of the blessed.

Third. God is called *Just objectively,* because he is the *object* of all justice and of all rectitude. To love Him is the highest justice; and although we give the name of justice to that virtue which accords to every one his due, yet that is only

human and political justice, and is the lowest in the scale of justice. What we refer to now is that supreme justice by which a man is formally just before God. It is the same as that by which God is just; and consists in the love of God and in a supreme conformity with the eternal law. In that kind of justice, human justice is eminently contained.

Fourth. God is called *Just* as *legislator* and *judge,* because He loves justice and hates injustice, in the greatest possible degree. That is to say He abhors those acts that are in opposition to the divine law and the divine majesty, and forbids them under pain of eternal damnation.

Finally God will establish and build on an everlasting foundation that order which the demons and men have violated. He will restore and rehabilitate it by rendering to all men according to their works on the day when He shall come to judge the world.

CHAPTER XX.

The Benign God.

Ps. lxviii; Wis. i; Joel ii; Luke, vi; Dionys. c. 4 and 5.

BENIGNITY is that attribute of God which the Greek text of the Bible expresses by the word *chrestos* and the Vulgate by the word *suavis* as we see in Psalms xxxiii, lxxxv, cviii and elsewhere.

It is attributed to God because of His infinite tendency to bestow limitless and eternal good. It is that benignity which prompted Him to create angels and men; to form them to His image so as to give them a share in His divinity and glory.

Second. His *Benignity* in our regard manifested itself especially after the ruin caused by sin. Far from rejecting us when we were lost, He showed a greater sweetness in our regard, by sending us His Son, in order that being incarnate and visible among us He might converse with us and thereby lift us out of our sins, show us the way of salvation, give us an example of how to live, satisfy the Divine Justice, redeem us by His passion and death, wash us in His

Blood, sanctify us by His Spirit and make us children of God. Over and above all this, He furnishes us with the means of salvation. He gave us those powerful helps, which are of a sensible and external character and are so wonderfully adapted to our nature.

Third. He gave us moreover, another ravishing manifestation of His Benignity. Before He ascended into heaven He delivered Himself entirely to us in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, in order to be for us always by His presence a source of consolation in our exile. He made it possible for us to offer it as a *sacrifice* so as to appease God's justice; and by receiving it as a *sacrament* to make us share in His divinity.

Finally, the *Benignity* of God shows itself in His dealings with sinners. He not only bears with them patiently, and refrains from punishing them though they repeatedly relapse into sin, but He calls them back when they wander away; He invites them to repentance, and is ever ready to restore them to grace whenever they wish to return. And when they do return, they are not received with harshness nor reproached for their ingratitude, but are greeted with kindness and tenderness as children who are infinitely dear to Him and He reinstates them in their former position of children of God.

As the climax of His *Benignity* He demands nothing of us above our strength, but only what is easy and acceptable to a well balanced mind. He assures us: "My yoke is sweet and my burden is light."

CHAPTER XXI.

The Patient God.

Exod. xxxiv; Num. xiv; Ps. lxxxvi, cii, cxliv; Eccles. v; Joel. ii; II Esdras, ix.

GOD shows His *Patience* and His *Longanimity* in the most admirable manner. For although His majesty and power are infinite; and although everything takes place in His presence and before His eyes, yet He bears with everything patiently and long withholds His vengeance. He does so lest we should be hurled to eternal death. He even suffers infinite ingratitude and submits to an infinity of outrages with which mortals requite His countless benefits. He bears with idolatry, blasphemy, insults, rage, hate, perfidy, perjury, sacrileges, conspiracies with his enemies, contempt of religion, contempt of the commandments, contempt of the Passion of Jesus Christ, contempt of all His benefits, and contempt of all the heavenly blessings He has promised. He has all that constantly before His eyes and yet He submits to it all with patience.

Now it must be remembered that the gravity of an offense increases in proportion as the majesty

and power of the one who is offended is more exalted, his presence more august, and the benefits which he has conferred more extraordinary. But as the majesty and power of God are infinite, as the benefits He has bestowed are of an infinite value, and as all this evil has been done in the infinite light of His countenance, it follows evidently that outrages against Him assume a certain character of infinite malice, and that His patience is infinite in tolerating them.

God is moreover called *Patient* because He bears with these injuries not only twice or thrice, or four, or five, or ten times, which no earthly prince would do, but a hundred times, nay a thousand, ten thousand, a hundred thousand times. Surely there is nothing to be compared to it and it surpasses the power of men or angels to fathom its mystery.

Not only does God restrain His avenging hand, but with the greatest sweetness restrains the angels and the demons who are eager to use their power against us to cast us into hell. St. Matthew teaches us this in the parable where the master forbids his servants to pluck out the cockle lest they might at the same time pluck out the wheat along with it. He bade them let both grow until the harvest, that is to say till the Day of Judgment. (Matt. c, xiii.)

Not only does God tolerate all this iniquity and withhold His vengeance, but He continues to pour out His blessings with an astounding profusion "making His sun to shine on the good and the wicked and His rain to fall on the just and the unjust."

Moreover He is prodigal in bestowing riches and honors and pleasure on His sworn enemies. He even gives them kingdoms and empires, the glory of the world, health, beauty, and long life; in brief, whatever men esteem most on earth.

We should remember that there are two kinds of patience. One shows itself in suffering sorrow and pain and the afflictions and discomforts incident to this life. This is the patience that shines with especial brilliancy in the martyrs and in most of the saints. The other kind consists in supporting outrages, injuries, contempt. That is the only kind in God and in Him it is infinite. If we wish to be His children we should imitate Him in this respect. But both kinds were practiced in the most eminent degree by Jesus Christ, and that is why we should imitate Him both in the one and the other.

CHAPTER XXII.

The God of Clemency.

Exod. xxxiv; II Paral. xxx 2;
Esdras. ix; Jonas. iv.

GOD is called *Clement* because of His exceedingly great kindliness towards sinners.

First. As a judge full of meekness, He readily diminishes the punishment due to sin; for even in the other life, the penalties are less than the offenses deserve, and God might justly punish the reprobate with much greater torments than those they suffer. In this life a single sigh of genuine sorrow is sufficient to make Him remit the eternal punishment due to sin and commute it to a temporal one, which is accepted as satisfactory, though it is slight and brief. Moreover He has deigned to make it possible for us, to buy ourselves off even from this temporal punishment by many very easy means.

Second. His clemency is resplendent also in the facility with which He pardons all the injuries committed against Him, even if they are infinite in number, and in some respect infinite in their atrocity. For there are no sins so great,

either in multitude or enormity, that He is not ready to pardon and to forget utterly if we repent of them from the bottom of our heart, and ask His forgiveness. Not only will He do that once, or twice, or ten times, or a hundred times, but thousands and tens of thousands of times.

Not merely is He ready to pardon us, but to adopt us as His children, and to admit us into a participation of His glory. Hence though He has abased His majesty in a manner that is amazing, He calls in a thousand ways to those who flee from Him; nay He entreats even His greatest enemies, promising to pardon them whenever they wish to return. He wishes to remove from above their heads the everlasting curse which is impending and to adopt them as His children and make them participators in His glory.

Finally His most sweet clemency appears chiefly in that He has sent us His Son to teach us and to call us back to Him by penance and a holy life, in order that we may escape the pains of hell and obtain eternal life and the communion of His glory.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The God of Sweetness.

Ps. xxiv; II Petr. ii.

GOD is called *Sweet,* first, because He is the source of all sweetness whether corporeal or spiritual; for all that there is of sweet or suave, or lovable or delectable in created things comes from Him, and is a slight participation in His sweetness which knows no bounds.

Second. Because not only every sweet and delectable object is from Him, but also because every feeling of sweetness in men and angels is from Him; for He has made and formed in them the faculty which renders them capable of that pleasure. He has likewise made every delectable object and every fitness and adaptableness which an object has to the faculty of the soul with which it cooperates in the perception of that object's sweetness. Thus He is the cause of all delight.

Third. Because He is the eternal and infinite sweetness of all the heavenly spirits and of all the souls of the blessed. He is such, both as object and as cause. As *object* because it is in the enjoyment of God and the tasting of His sweet-

ness that they feel themselves inundated with the greatest joy; as *cause,* for it is He who is the author not only of the light of glory by which the angels and the blessed see God clearly, but He is the author also of the habit of charity by which we love God above all things. From this follow that pleasure and boundless joy which they feel in the good things of God, that is to say, in the blessed tasting of His immeasurable sweetness.

Fourth. Because He is infinite sweetness both *objectively* and *formally. Objectively* because He is Himself the *object* of infinite sweetness. In Him everything sweet and delectable is supereminently contained. *Formally* because in beholding Himself comprehensively or according to all that He is, He derives from Himself infinite joy and infinite delight. Moreover He is Himself infinite love and from Himself conceives, so to speak, infinite joy.

To Jesus is given the name *Dulcedo Cordium;* the sweetness of hearts. The expression is St. Bernard's, and is most appropriate, for it is Christ who by the bitterness of His Passion, delivered us from eternal damnation and transferred us to the eternal sweetness of heaven.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The True God.

Exod. xxxiv, 6; Deut. vii, xxxii; II Paral. xv; Wis. i; Ps. cxliv; Jer. x; John xiv, 10; I John v, 12; Dionys. c. 7; St. Thos. I p. q. 16.

GOD is called *True, Truth* and *The First Truth* in four different ways.

First. In His *Essence* or *objectively;* because He is the first object of the intellect. In Him all intelligible objects and all objective truth are eminently contained. From Him every creature has received the truth of his being and possesses the privilege of being truly such according to the species and degree of its essence; of being called with truth such a creature and no other. Thus, for example, we can say this is truly a man, this is truly a lion, this is truly gold, and so on for all other creatures. Hence the truth of all things descends from the First Truth which is the truth of the Divine Essence.

Moreover the objective truth of things and especially of those that already exist consists in the conformity of their nature with the divine idea, in accordance with which and by which they have been made. But if we consider them ac-

cording to their possible nature, by abstracting from their being or non-being, then their objective truth will consist in their conformity with the Divine Essence, in as much as the Divine Essence is imitable or can admit of being participated in. For it is thence as from the original idea of all things that arises the nature of the possibles, as I have elsewhere shown.

Second. God is called the *First Truth in Knowledge*. He is the *Truth* because He is the most true, certain, clear and exalted conception of Himself. He is moreover the *First Truth* because from Him descends all knowledge in men and angels and even in animals, which have the last and lowest participation in that knowledge.

By His wisdom and knowledge God has formed in creatures all their power of knowing and He has determined the degree of knowledge which they should enjoy. He also lends them His concurrence so that according to their degree they participate in real knowledge.

Third. God is called the *First Truth in Speech*. He is the *Faithful Witness* because as He is Himself His own knowledge, His own love, His own charity, so is He His own Truth. Moreover the virtue of truthfulness in men and angels which always prompts their will to utter the truth and avoid falsehood, is in God the Divine Will or

Essence, which by its nature has an infinite propensity to what is true and an infinite horror of what is false.

God is called the *First and Highest Truth* or *Veracity* because the virtue of truthfulness or veracity in men and angels is a slight participation in His infinite truth. Hence His truthfulness is the first and highest rule of belief. On it ultimately our faith is based. We believe the Church, because it is governed and taught by the Holy Ghost or God Himself; but we believe in God because He is the First Truth. We do not believe the First Truth, because of any extrinsic reason, but because of Itself. For by Itself and solely by Itself, It has a right to exact from us an unqualified and unlimited faith.

This attribute supposes two others on which in a certain manner it is based, namely the infinite Goodness and the infinite Wisdom of God. His Goodness is the reason of His absolute inability to deceive; and His Wisdom is the reason of the absolute impossibility of His being deceived.

Fourth. God is called *Truthful in His Promises,* which is an other word for Fidelity.

Fidelity in men and angels is a virtue that inclines to the keeping of promises, because of the obligation contracted. But in God Fidelity is

the divine Essence or Will considered in its divine propensity to fidelity. Hence as God is His own Essence, His own love, His own knowledge, so also He is His own Fidelity. He is the infinite propensity to fulfil what He has promised. And because by Jesus Christ He fulfils all that He has promised to the human race, Christ is frequently called in Holy Scripture *Truth,* just as He is called Mercy, in as much as God by Him has shown all His mercy and made its effects felt by mankind.

Finally God is called the *First Truth* because from Him all fidelity in men and angels descends as a sort of participation in the infinite fidelity of God.

CHAPTER XXV.

The Blessed God.

I Tim. vi; Apoc. xx.

THE formal beatitude of the rational nature both of men and angels consists in the clear vision of God, our supreme good, and in the love and fruition of God. Hence the formal beatitude of God consists in the clear vision of Himself, the love of Himself, and the enjoyment of Himself. For just as He is the greatest good for men and angels, so He is for Himself. Nor can we imagine any greater or more excellent good than Himself. In the vision and enjoyment of Himself consists His beatitude. The Divine Essence is so great a good that the sole vision of it, the enjoyment and taste of its sweetness render Him happy, as the love of Himself renders Him just and holy.

Hence God is called *Blessed,* first, because He clearly sees and loves Himself and is in the enjoyment of Himself as His own supreme good. And as He beholds and loves Himself and is in the enjoyment of Himself in a comprehensive and infinite manner, it follows necessarily that He is infinitely blessed and that His formal beatitude is infinite. For these three acts are perfectly equal to their infinite object.

Second. He is called *Blessed* because He is so by His Essence, just as He is infinitely holy by His Essence. More than that; He is His own formal beatitude; for He is His own vision, His own love, His own joy, His own delight. Moreover all this is not in Him by way of accidents or vital acts elicited by the power of the light of glory in His understanding or will, as happens to men or angels, but it is a simple self-subsisting form which is His Essence. This is a marvel worthy of our profoundest admiration.

Third. God is called *Blessed* because He is not only His own formal, but His His own *objective* beatitude, by the vision and enjoyment of which He and all the saints are happy. He is not only His own vision, His own love, His own joy, but also His own Essence and His own supreme good and object in which is all good, by the sight and enjoyment of which He is Himself blessed and by which the saints are made participants in His beatitude. Hence God both on the part of the act (if I may so speak), and on the part of the object is happy of Himself and He is so because of nothing else. He is thus simultaneously His own *formal* and His own *objective* beatitude.

Fourth. He is called Blessed as the author of all blessedness in angels and in men; for He has

created them in His own image and likeness so as to make them share in His happiness. He has moreover infused into them the gifts of grace by means of which they have the power to merit this beatitude and to make themselves worthy of it.

Finally to those who persevere in the state of grace He gives after their death the light of glory, that they may see Him clearly and rejoice in His sweetness and beauty. In those acts consists the essence of our beatitude. Hence since all blessedness descends from Him and is only a participation in His beatitude, He must be blessed in a most infinitely excellent manner.

CHAPTER XXVI.

God, the First Beginning of All Things.

GOD is called the *First Beginning* of all creatures and of each in particular. For no matter on how many causes they may depend, as we see in the case of plants, animals and the works of art, they all ultimately depend on Him as the First of all causes.

He is called *The First Beginning,* first, because He is the most ancient beginning. There were none prior to Him; none were with Him from eternity. On the contrary whatever causes or beginnings of things there may have been they were infinitely remote from Him in point of time.

Second. He is the first in *dignity,* because He is the highest, and there can be no being above Him from whom He could receive the power of being the cause of all that is created. No one gave Him the power of creating; no one indicated the means to be employed; no one revealed to him the idea; no one persuaded Him to draw the universe from nothing; no one proposed to Him that object; no one aided Him; no one cooperated with Him. He had all that of Himself; and by Himself He has made all things. He has of Himself

infinite power to create outside of Himself and beneath Himself, whatever being He may wish. Of Himself He possesses all art, and all wisdom, and the idea of every imaginable work. Of Himself He possesses all the plans of works and all the inclination to execute them. He is Himself the end of every work. He alone without the cooperation of any one, without any one to furnish the material, and without the aid of instruments created all things, made all things.

Third. He is called *The First Beginning,* because He is the beginning of all beginnings, the cause of all causes, and He is such under a threefold aspect: as the efficient cause, as the final cause, as the ideal cause or exemplar. Although there are five kinds of causes: the material, the formal, the efficient, the ideal and the final, nevertheless He is in the threefold manner just explained, the cause and principle of all.

In effect it is from Him that the *matter* of corporeal things receives its species, its character, its proportion, its order and its aptitude for union with the form, from both of which the resulting component is made.[1] In the same way it is from

[1]In the Scholastic system all material beings are viewed as the product of two concreated constituent factors, the one passive and recipient, the other active and determining. The first is styled the *matter,* the second the *form,* and both are called substantial principles in as much as by their essence they constitute one complete substantial being.—*Maher. Psychol.*

His wisdom and His power that every *form* of corporeal things receives its species, and the order essential to matter which is disposed in a definite manner so as to be substantially united to it. All proportion and agreement, the reciprocal attraction, the mutual combination of matter and form, of objects and their accidents, of substances and their ornaments have been planned, instituted, ordered and supplied with all their powers by Him.

Fourth. The same is true of every *efficient* cause and of every operative power in angels, men, animals, plants and the rest. God is the author of their energies. He made and communicated these powers. From Him they derive their character, order and mode of being.

Fifth. It is from God that every ideal cause, every concept and every art of the artificer is derived; for He is the author of every intelligence, and of every intellectual illumination and conception.

Sixth. He is the author of every *final* cause. The reason is that every purpose intended by men or angels (and they alone work for a purpose) has from Him the goodness, attractiveness, advantage and excellence that make such purpose desirable. So also the ends for which all other creatures strive have been assigned by Him.

Hence He is the beginning of all beginnings and is superior to all beginnings. He is the cause of every cause and is superior to every cause. Hence St. Denis frequently calls Him the *Hyper-archios Archi,* by which is meant that God is not only the beginning of all beginnings but that His manner of operation is far higher than, and absolutely independent of any other beginning.

Hence as St. Paul says (*Ep. ad Rom.*) "Of Him, and by Him and in Him are all things." *Of Him* because it is of Himself, as the origin and root-idea of all things that He has conceived them in His mind from all eternity. *By Him* because He alone without any concurrence created all things in time. *In Him,* or as the Greek has it, *for Him,* because He is the end of all things. They have been created for His glory.

CHAPTER XXVII.

God the Creator.

St. Thos. I p. qq. 65, 66.

GOD is called *Creator* because by His infinite wisdom and from all eternity, He conceived most distinctly, and formed in His mind with infinite clearness an infinity of worlds with all their splendor and with all that belongs to each of them. Among those infinite worlds present to His mind He freely chose the present one in preference to all the others, and from all eternity firmly resolved to create it, form it, arrange it and perfect it along with the angels, the two authors of the human race and all its marvellous mechanism. Moreover He decreed to create it after an infinity of ages at a certain epoch of time, in the space of six days, and to fix it in a definite place in immensity, having previously conceived, designed and determined most distinctly and immutably, its measures, its forms, its forces and its divisions.

Second. He is called *Creator* because by the power of His eternal decree, operating after infinite ages, at a determined point of time and space, He with sovereign power and by His word

alone created it from nothing and infinitely beneath Himself. After having created it, He by His ever admirable concurrence marvellously continues to keep it fixedly in the same space and state and nature for all eternity. Moreover this universal concurrence is so powerful that nothing can perish unless He withdraws His hand. That He never does, except when some other cause exacts it, as for example, when on account of sin, He no longer concurs in conserving the gift of habitual grace. Thus also He withdraws this influence when as in the lives of plants and animals the conditions necessary for existence cease according to the natural laws.

There are many things to be admired in this work of the Creator. First, because the decree by which the world was made preceded the execution of it by an infinite period, and it was only after infinite ages that the actual creation of the world took place. Secondly, because although God created the world at a determined point of space and time, He could have created it any other moment and after any stretch in the infinity of space. Thirdly because during all that prodigious work there was no change in God. Fourthly because all these numberless, varied, firm, solid, massive and enduring things were in an instant drawn from nothing.

It should be remarked that creation can be considered in two ways: First as an *ascent,* or as a passage of the creature from non-being to being, as if in its preceding state it had been hidden away in nothingness, and was then drawn out by the omnipotence of its Maker into being. Secondly as a *descent* or an emanation of the creature from the omnipotence of the Creator, where before it had been eminently contained as in its root and in its idea, passing thence into formal and actual being; as the light is said to emanate from the sun; heat from fire; the visible species from objects, the picture from the art of the painter, etc. I omit many other things which may easily present themselves to the mind that attentively considers the works of God.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

God the Conservator.

GOD is called the *Conservator,* first, because He gives to all creatures and to each, according to its capacity and degree, all the help required to preserve and defend itself from death and from all that may harm it. We see this power in men and even in the lowest animals. For the Creator has endowed them with an instinct which prompts them to procure what is helpful and to shun what is harmful. The same thing is observable in plants and inanimate things and even in the elements, although in the last named it is not so perceptible.

He is called the Conservator of the world because by an incessant and a substantific influence He acts on all creatures in such a way to preserve their nature. Without such influence no matter how great and firm and solid a thing may appear it would be extinguished instantly and lapse into its original nothingness. For all created things, even the angels and the celestial court are but terms of the divine action and of the divine influence acting upon those things, not extrinsically but intrinsically, as the light diffused

in the world is the term of the illumination or operation of the sun. Hence it follows that nothing has solidity or permanency except by the divine concurrence; and that depends on the free will of God whereby He does or does not will to continue this concurrence. Hence no existing creature can perish as long as God has resolved to lend His concurrence, and no external power can cause it to perish.

This influence or concurrence of God is nothing else than a continuation of the creative act or an operation equivalent to creation. Hence as the Fathers say: "There is need of no less a power to sustain the world and to prevent it from falling into naught, than there was to make it pass from non-being into being."

Third. God is called *Conservator* because He has resolved to preserve the world, the angels and men, by continuing unchangeably this substantific concurrence for all eternity.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Divine Providence.

St. Thos. I p. q. 22.

WE say that God extends His providence to and watches over all creatures, first, because by His Providence all beings exist in their species and their individual nature, with all their adornments, all their properties and all their functions. For in the whole of nature there is not one being to which He has not given all that it is; its figure, its form, its beauty, to enable it to appear with what is suitable for its state. There is none to which He has not given also its particular character, its inclinations, its powers, its instruments or organs, all of which are in absolute harmony with the functions they are to fulfil. "He hath disposed all things with measure, number and weight." (Wis. i.)

This is clearly seen not only in the principal parts of the universe, as in the firmament, the stars, the sun, the moon, but also in the organism of the vilest worms of the earth and in their various segments, and in the plants and flowers.

Second. God's Providence extends to every-

thing because in the whole range of nature and throughout the universe, nothing can be done that God has not previously considered most exactly in the infinite light of His wisdom, and has not, so to speak, deliberated upon as to the fitness or the propriety of permitting it or at least of not preventing it. This divine consideration and deliberation precedes every decree both as to what is to be done and what is to be permitted in connection with every creature in particular. For the causes of all things that occur are thus held by His hand, so that without His will nothing can escape His control or issue in a single act. Hence it follows that nothing can be done without the Providence of God.

Third. Another manifestation of His Providence is seen in the fact that although as a consequence of sin and free will, He seems to permit countless disorders chiefly in human affairs, yet He permits nothing except for a supreme reason, and if we may so express ourselves, without previous deliberation. Moreover what appears to be disorder will be cited before His tribunal and judged according to the laws of rigid justice, and by His decree it will be made to reenter into the most perfect and exquisite order.

Fourth and finally, all the order that exists

either in the structure of the universe, or the organism of plants and animals, or in the acts of creatures, or in the means they employ to accomplish the purpose of their existence—and this is true of all creatures, spiritual as well as corporeal—has been made and established by the hand of God, and is the work of His Divine Providence.

CHAPTER XXX.

God the Ruler of the World.

WE call God the *Ruler of the World,* first, because after creating the world, He preserves, moves and governs it. He governs all the various beings contained therein and shapes everything in conformity with the individual natures of each. He cooperates with and guides each of them in their natural functions, and by the instrumentality of the heavenly bodies in their incessant changes maintains the regular course of the births and deaths of the lower creation.

Second. He directs all rational nature both human and angelic to its proper end, by the most suitable internal and external means such as laws and examples, lights flashed on the mind and affections enkindled in the heart, and also by threats and promises, happiness and suffering and so on. And although at times He allows the evil spirit some power to tempt and harass us, it is to exercise us in virtue and to afford us an occasion of obtaining greater merit. He nevertheless holds him in check so that he can do little against us if we wish to resist.

Third. He has given to all of us from the be-

ginning the most sufficient help for our salvation; and even after we sin, He gives what is abundantly sufficient to repair the ruin that has been wrought. So that on His part there is no reason why all should not be saved.

Fourth. He will one day render to every one according to his works, and will do so in the sight of all rational creatures, in the General Judgment of the whole world, in order that the equity and benignity of His rule and of the Judgment itself may be made clearly manifest to all.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The Divine Master.

Dionys. c. 12.

GOD is called the *Master of All,* first because all things are essentially His. They are the works of His hands; have been conceived by His wisdom, drawn from nothing by His power, and brought into being to reveal His glory. He is the *Master of All* because He can dispose of all as He wishes, for all things depend at every moment on a sign of His free will. Nor has He vouchsafed to bestow this lordship upon any other; and hence He has incomparably more right and power over the whole universe, over all the angels and men, than let us say, a master over his horse, a potter over his vase, or a man over his free will. For the owner of the horse did not make the animal, nor the potter the clay, nor the fire, nor the skill that fashions the vessel, nor has man given himself the power to exercise his freedom of will. But God has of Himself all that is needed to obtain and produce all that He wishes, whereas creatures are but the exterior term of His interior act. Hence His dominion is infinite

and incommunicable to creatures, and no creature can exist outside of that dominion, or belong to himself, for he depends essentially on God as his first beginning and last end.

Second. God is not only Master of all things that are, but of those that are not; namely of all possible things. He is Master of the infinity of worlds, of the infinity of men, of the infinity of angels that He can create. All the world of the possibles is for ever present to Him in all the immensity of its possible species. He sees them as clearly in His mind as if they had in reality passed into existence. He sees each in its own nature and, at one sign of His will, He could bring about that in obedience to His command they would pass forthwith from nothing and appear before Him. "For He calleth the things which are not as those that are." (Rom. iv; Wis. ii). Hence all things are equally in His power and He can do as He pleases with all possible and actual worlds. It is as if there were a king so powerful as to be obeyed not only by the subjects he actually has, but those also he would have if the people of every part of the world were ready to serve Him, at the least sign he might make. Such a one would be rightly called the King of the universe. Such is God with regard to all possible worlds.

Third. God is called *The Master of All,* because all dominion and all right both of property and jurisdiction in angels and in men emanate from Him. From Him all right of dominion is derived, because it has its foundation in rational nature, and the liberty of free will. From Him also come all things that can be possessed; and if He did not at every moment preserve the riches and properties which men possess, sudden and absolute poverty would everywhere ensue. From Him also comes all real right to acquire or hold, or freedom to dispose of anything whatever. That is what is meant by the right of dominion.

God is called also *The Lord of Lords,* not only because all dominion both of property and jurisdiction emanates from Him, but also because all the lords and rulers of the earth and all the rich men of the world are subject to Him as His slaves, and incomparably more than slaves; for He has as much right over all kings and lords and over all that is subject to them, as He has over the meanest worm that crawls. This will appear especially on the Day of Judgment when numberless kings and lords will be beneath His feet, as it were annihilated in the dust.

It is in the same manner and for the same reason that He is called *The King of Kings* and *The Lord of Lords.*

He bears also the name of *The King of the Ages,* because His Kingdom will exist and flourish for all ages, and will never suffer disaster, or detriment, or diminution. It will last for all eternity, ever strong and triumphant; in sovereign happiness and in a sovereign affluence of all good according to the words of the Royal Prophet: "Thy Kingdom is a Kingdom of all ages." (Ps. cxliv); whereas all other kingdoms will soon end with all their princes and all their possessions.

God is called the *Saint of Saints* or the *Holy of Holies* because all holiness and all purity both in men and angels is derived from Him, and because His holiness surpasses infinitely the holiness of all of them taken together, since, as we have explained in Chapter XVII, He is infinitely more pure, more elevated and more enduring than all.

He is called the *God of Gods* because all *deification* of the just and blessed comes from Him. The supreme perfection of rational nature consists in its resemblance to God. St. Denis calls it *deification,* and for that reason the blessed are spoken of as *deified,* as gods, as *Sons of God,* in the sense that Scripture intends. For if Holy Scripture calls earthly kings and rulers, gods, because men here below venerate them as gods,

as we see in Psalm lxxxi and Jno. x, for the reason that they share in God's judicial power, with much greater reason may we give the name of gods to saints; not only because they will be associated with Jesus Christ in judging the world, but because they are deified and made like unto God, to such a degree that it is impossible to have the resemblance greater than it is. Hence Holy Scripture in the version of the Septuagint often speaks of the angels as gods, and the Royal Prophet in Psalm xlvi refers to the Apostles when he says: *"the gods of the earth have been marvellously exalted;"* and in Genesis c. iii the serpent said: *"you will be like unto gods,"* that is like the deified and glorious angels, though I am aware of course that this passage is otherwise explained. However we must bear in mind that in ordinary language it would be wrong to call the inhabitants of heaven gods. They should be spoken of as saints and blessed, so as to avoid the error of the pagans who had many gods to whom by the most stupid of errors they accorded the worship which is due only to the Divinity.

CHAPTER XXXII.

God the Redeemer.

GOD is called the *Redeemer,* first, because when we were lost and made slaves of Satan, and condemned to eternal damnation, He alone moved by a tender compassion for us, redeemed us. From slaves of the devil He made us children of God, and from the justly merited punishment of eternal damnation He transferred us to the right of a celestial inheritance. And this He did not accomplish in a manner that was without difficulty; not by pronouncing a few words as in creating the world, but with infinite cost and labor; going to the extent of paying as the price of our purchase His own blood and life, after He had suffered countless sorrows and ineffable afflictions.

Second. He is called *Redeemer* because He has not merely purchased us from slavery, but paid for us an infinite ransom, opening for us at the same time a perennial and inexhaustible fountain of reconciliation so that we could be reconciled to God and might be able to satisfy divine justice not only once, but ten times, a hundred times, a thousand times, as often in fact as

we might have the misfortune of falling into sin. For seeing the great weakness of human nature it would have been too little to have been able to be reconciled only once with God. Hence in His infinite goodness, He wished that it should always be in our power to repeat this reconciliation by genuine repentance. Among men or among princes there is no example of redemption such as that. His blood is the all sufficing price that could obtain from divine justice infinite reconciliations even of infinite worlds were they to commit infinite sins no matter how enormous such sins might be. Hence the title of *Redeemer* belongs to Jesus Christ in a degree of excellence which is incommunicable to any mere creature.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The Light of the World.

Ps. xvii; John i; Dionys. 4.

GOD is called the *Light of the World,* because, first, all light, material as well as spiritual, comes from Him. He first poured out on the material world which was previously buried in darkness, a most welcome and abundant light which is the joy of all creatures. He has likewise filled all intelligences with the light of natural knowledge.

Second. God is called the *Light* because all supernatural doctrine, all knowledge and all enlightenment by which all men and all angels are prepared for and elevated to salvation, descends through His most benignant revelation. He alone can reveal to us the counsel and decrees, by which He resolved from all eternity to make us participate in His glory, just as He alone can reveal to us the ways and the means by which we may attain it. Without this light we should all be in darkness, neither knowing the way nor the end.

Third. He is called the *Light* because He illumines all those who are in the darkness of affliction and sorrow, as soon as they have recourse

to Him as their Refuge. He consoles them by the knowledge of heavenly things, as the Psalmist tells us: "Come ye to Him and be enlightened and your faces shall not be confounded." (Ps. xxxiii.)

Fourth. He is the *Light* because the light of glory which penetrates and brightens the soul and by the help of which it sees God clearly as He is in Himself and all creatures in God and beneath God, is derived from Him, its only source. Thus by the light of glory all creation will be objectively illumined because all the elements and objects which are in creation will be placed before the gaze of the blessed in the greatest clearness, and they will seem as if penetrated and resplendent with the light of glory.

Again, God is called the *Light,* first, because He is the source of all corporeal and spiritual light and of all knowledge. For all knowledge is a light which illumines simultaneously both the mind and the object. The mind is the subject that receives the light of knowledge and the object which was previously in darkness is manifested to the mind by the knowledge illumining the mind.

Second. Because He is Himself the clearest, the most certain and the securest knowledge. That knowledge is free from ignorance or ob-

scurity, both with regard to Himself and all intelligible things actual or possible as it is written: "God is light and in Him there is no darkness." (I John i.) It follows then that the whole world of possibles is in the greatest clearness before Him because it is illumined by the infinite light of His knowledge.

Third. The name of Light is given to God because He is infinitely superior to all created light that is or can be, and He contains eminently in Himself all light. It is from Him that all light descends as a feeble participation in His infinite light.

Finally, Scripture tells us that He dwells in light inaccessible, because by knowledge, love and possession He dwells in Himself and He is essentially *Light Inaccessible* which no creature by the mere force of nature can ever attain to even in thought.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

God the Sanctifier.

GOD is called the *Sanctifier,* first, because all the sanctity of men and angels is from Him. It is by the communication of His sanctity that He assimiliates them all to Himself and makes them godlike.

Second. He is called the *Sanctifier,* because He alone can pardon the offenses committed against His infinite majesty. He alone can purify souls from sin, and sanctify them. He alone can illumine them by supernatural knowledge and infuse in them supernatural charity. He alone can communicate the Holy Spirit along with the gift of charity. For the Holy Spirit is given at the same time as charity in order to sanctify souls by His presence, to protect them by His power, and to illumine and urge them to all manner of good in order that He Himself and by Himself may be their possession forever, and that so they may be forever happy.

Third. God is called the *Sanctifier* because He alone elevates to a supreme and consummate

sanctity all those who endeavor to sanctify them-by means of which they know Him and love Him in the sublimest manner. For the most exalted, intrinsic and real sanctity consists in the most exalted knowledge and enjoyment of God.

CHAPTER XXXV.

God Our Refuge.

GOD is called our *Refuge,* first, because in all our afflictions both of body and soul, in all our temptations, in all our perils, in all our anguish and in all our necessities, when we can hope for nothing from any source, we have in Him an assured refuge, and can turn to Him by prayer and implore His help. Those who have recourse to Him and who invoke Him with firm hope and confidence He does not reject no matter what their sins may be; even if they have often merited hell. He always hears them, and either grants what they ask or bestows something incomparably more precious and useful for their salvation.

Second. God is called our *Refuge,* because when all creatures desert us or can no longer help us, He never abandons us but is always near us, is in us, outside of us, and around us, on all sides of us, and in all parts ever ready to help, to aid, to console and to save. Thus we can rightly say with David: "Our God is our refuge and strength, a helper in trouble which have found us exceedingly. Therefore we will not

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fear when the earth shall be troubled and the mountains shall be removed into the heart of the sea." (Ps. xlv.) And again: "The Lord is my light and my salvation. The Lord is the protector of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" And further on: "My father and mother have left me; but the Lord hath taken me up." (Ps. xxvi.)

Third. God is likewise the especial *Refuge* of all the just who are weary of the world, who long to flee from its deceits, its malice and its overwhelmingly cruel sufferings, and who sigh with all the ardor of their hearts for God the source of life and the abyss of all good in whom alone they will find perfect rest. For He is the last and supreme end of all their desires, and it is in Him that all should with the whole energy of their souls seek refuge, if they wish to gain the beatific repose of heaven.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

God the Tender Father.

GOD is like a *tender Father* who lifts us up when we fall and takes us in His arms; because when the whole human race was lost and had incurred the penalty of eternal damnation, He alone had compassion on us and began with the greatest tenderness to redeem us and to restore us to our original condition in order to accomplish our salvation, according to the words of St. Luke. "He hath received Israel His servant, being mindful of His mercy." (Luke ii.)

Second. God shows Himself a *tender Father,* because He most willingly receives even His enemies who have grievously offended Him, as soon as they wish to return to Him. He pardons all their sins, reestablishes them in their former condition, adopts them anew as His children and restores them their right to the celestial inheritance which they had forfeited. He is like the father of the prodigal who received his son with great joy after all the sins with which he had defiled himself and after wasting his substance in riotous living.

Third. God shows Himself to be a *tender Father,* because He receives benignly all those who are plunged in affliction when they have recourse to Him. He consoles them and comes to their assistance at the opportune moment according to the word of Holy Scripture: "Know ye that no one who hath hoped in the Lord hath been confounded." (Eccl. ii.) And the Lord Himself hath said: "Come to Me all that labor and are burdened and I will refresh you." (Matth. ii.)

Fourth. God shows Himself a *tender Father* because He takes under His special protection all those who have consecrated themselves to His service. He exercises a paternal care over them; He enlightens them and forms them to be His children, and raises them to great perfection to make them as far as possible like to Himself in their thoughts, their affections, their actions and He endows them with the proper dispositions to obtain their celestial inheritance.

Fifth. God finally shows His paternal love by receiving the just into His kingdom when they die, and admitting them to a blissful participation in His glory and in every good as the Royal Prophet says. "Receive me according to Thy word and I shall live, and suffer not that I shall be confounded in my hope." (Ps. cxviii.)

CHAPTER XXXVII.

God Our Protector.

Wis. xi, 25, 26

GOD is called our *Protector* in general because He keeps every creature in its species, in its integrity, and in its natural state. As far as its condition requires, He defends it from everything harmful, but He is *especially* a *Protector* with regard to mankind, which is exposed to an infinity of dangers and subject to countless tribulations.

First. Because He preserves us from numberless sins into which each of us would fall if His benign protection did not prevent it. For on account of the extreme feebleness of our nature and our inclination to evil, there is no kind of sin into which we should not have been easily drawn by the devices and power of the devil; and we should have remained in them, if God in His kindness and in the most marvellous way had not encompassed us with His protection. Hence St. Paul says. "Let no one glory in himself" (II Cor. ch. x), as if he had avoided sin by his own care. On the contrary we should humiliate ourselves before God and recognize both our own weakness

and God's goodness, and thank Him no less for the sins we have not committed than for the benefits we have received.

Second. Because just as He has preserved us from an infinity of sins into which otherwise we should have fallen, so He has prevented us from numberless dangers of incurring damnation into which we would have rushed a thousand times had not His clemency warded them off. For whoever is in a state of mortal sin deserves the eternal fire of hell, and would be instantly cast into it by the demons, if God permitted it, Hence we must conclude that when God preserves us from sin, He preserves us *mediately* from eternal damnation.

Third. Because He not only preserves us indirectly but *immediately* and *directly* whenever we are in a state of mortal sin. For then we are really at the gates of hell, and nothing more would be neded for eternal damnation did not God arrest His just anger which is seeking to burst upon us, and did He not keep back the demons who are eager to seize upon us; or finally —and this is often the case—did He not avert from us what might deprive us of life. In that way He shields and preserves us from damnation, so as to give us time to do penance and work out our salvation.

Fourth. Not only does He preserve us from sins and from hell, but from numberless other misfortunes, afflictions, adversities, etc., into which without His protecting hand we should have fallen and in which we would have committed sins that would have ultimately dragged us to hell. For He knows with absolute certainty what would be the result of each one of those trials, viz. which ones would lead to heaven and which to hell. So in His tender love for us, He often diverts from us what He forsees would end in the loss of our soul. For all this we ought to thank Him every day of our lives.

Fifth. We call Him our *Protector* because He protects the just with special care, as His children and the heirs of His Kingdom, and especially those who are consecrated to His service and His glory. To them He shows Himself as a special protector. For they are the precious pearls and diamonds in the treasure house of the Lord. "He guards them as the apple of His eye" (Ps. xvi and lxii.) that is to say, as those who are dearest to Him. He protects them "as the hen who gathereth the chickens under her wings" Matth. xxiii.)

Sixth. God bears this name because He is also the protector of the blessed, in as much as He preserves them from every fall, from every

sin, from all sadness, from error, from death, and from suffering both of soul and body. He does all this by keeping them in the light of His glory. For if He withdrew His concurrence, He would that moment cease to preserve them. If that light were extinguished in them they would cease to be happy. The old infirmity would be renewed in them, and they would fall again into their former misery and even be eternally lost. Hence the eternity of their happiness is founded on the eternal protection of God.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

God Our Helper.

GOD is called our *Helper in general* with regard to all creatures. The reason is that all power of acting in any manner whatever, and also all created forces are dependent at every instant on Him, to such an extent that not a single act can be performed without His concurrence, His cooperation and His aid. Moreover to accord such assistance is for Him most easy, for He is intimately present in all creatures and by His act and influence maintains them in their nature, their being and their power.

God is especially our *Helper* because without special aid and assistance on His part:

First. No one can rise from the state of sin and damnation and regain the state of the children of God.

Second. No one can escape the snares of the enemy and overcome temptations.

Third. No one can do anything that avails for eternal life.

Fourth. No one can persevere in virtue to the end. In everything, we need God's especial help.

Finally God makes the inhabitants of heaven

feel His help. For in the state of beatitude no one can see Him and love Him with beatific love, no one can taste His boundless sweetness, that is to say, enjoy Him, unless God assists by the special help which comes through the light of glory and the gift of charity.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

God Our Strength.

GOD is called our *Strength,* first, because by His help we are raised from the state of sin and damnation to that of grace and divine sonship.

Second. Because by His help we overcome our enemies who are very powerful and very deceitful, and we are able to defeat all the machinations they employ against us in their efforts to compass our ruin.

Third. Because by His grace, martyrdom is undergone even by virgins and children, all the cruelty of tyrants defied, and all the pleasures of the world despised.

Fourth. Because by His help perseverance in the most difficult undertakings is granted us.

Fifth. Because by His help we reach heaven and gain eternal life.

Finally God is the *Strength* of the saints because by His help they can do everything that is required for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

CHAPTER XL.

God Our Support.

GOD is called *Our Support*: *Firmamentum Nostrum,* first, because all the steadfastness of the just in the practice of virtue and all the constancy of those who persevere in well-doing, remaining unmoved as they do in spite of every temptation and trial, must be ascribed to Him.

Second. Because all the perseverance of the inhabitants of heaven in their supremely happy state depends on Him and is maintained by His decree.

Third. Because in general all the stability which spiritual and corporeal creatures display in their state, their work and their actions, depends on Him alone and on His uninterrupted concurrence.

CHAPTER XLI.

God Our Life

Dionys. c. 6.

GOD is called *Life* in general, first, because He is the source of all life. For all life, the highest, the middlemost and the lowest, viz. the life of angels, of men, of animals and of plants comes from Him and is a relatively bright or obscure image or participation in the primordial source of life. All life is contained in Him eminently, from all eternity and without limit.

Second. God is called *Life,* because He is Himself infinite, boundless and eternal life, both formally and objectively. He is *formally,* because the highest formal life consists in the clear vision, the love and the enjoyment of the Divine Being. Now He is Himself that vision, that love, and that enjoyment, and consequently He is for Himself His own formal life. He is moreover His own *objective* life, because He is His own vital essence, in the vision, love and enjoyment of which formal, eternal and blessed life consists. His life is infinite as are also His

vision, His love and the pleasure He derives from His essence, which is the infinite good in which infinite other possessions are contained. Hence just as He has all His wisdom, all His love, and all His joy from Himself, both on the part of the object and on that of the vital act—if I may use that expression—so under both heads and under this twofold aspect He has His life entirely from Himself.

Third. God is called the *Life of all things,* even of the possibles according to their objective and intelligible being. For all things live in Him by the eternal thought or idea by which He conceives them and understands them. By means of those ideas and concepts, all things exist objectively in the divine intelligence and shine there with as much light as if they had an external entity. In this manner they receive, so to speak, a vital and eternal entity which consists solely in being comprehended by the Divine Understanding; and because of this vital concept all things are said to live in God just as a work lives in the mind of the artificer.

But God is especially called *Our Life,* first, because when we were dead in our sins and condemned to eternal death which is called the second death, He Himself delivered us from both by the death of His Son, and infused in us the life of

grace by the help of which we have the power of attaining eternal life.

Second. Because He does not vivify those who are dead in their sins, merely once or twice, but a hundred and a thousand times. Nay He is ready to give life to all sinners who have destroyed themselves by sin and who have extinguished in themselves the divine light, as soon as they have recourse to Him by genuine penance, and indeed every time after they have fallen into sin. If they return to Him with repentance in their soul, He will receive them as a father. He calls them in a thousand ways, He invites them, He attracts them, He compels them to return to the life which they have lost.

Third. God is also called *Our Life* because, first, He is the cause of all the blessings of grace and glory, by which we shall live a life that is eternal, divine, sublime and most blessed; and second, because He is Himself the object of eternal life. In this clear vision and enjoyment of His Divine Being eternal life consists.

CHAPTER XLII.

God Our Hope.

GOD is called *Our Hope,* first, because He is the sovereign good we hope for; which we desire more than and before anything else, and which our heart pants for as the ultimate term of all our hopes and desires.

Second. God is called *Our Hope,* because it is He from whose infinite benignity, and wisdom, and power we hope for all things whether it be our last end or the means to attain it. None but He can give us those things. Therefore He is our hope both as the supreme good we hope for, and as the author and helper by whose aid we hope to attain it.

Third. Jesus Christ is also called *Our Hope* because of His merits by which we cherish the confidence of obtaining both whatever is necessary for our salvation and also salvation itself. Without those merits there would be no hope of salvation.

Finally God is called *"the Hope of all the ends of the earth and of the sea afar off"* because all nations expect what is good for them from God, and for that they pray.

CHAPTER XLIII.

God Our Salvation.

GOD is called *Our Salvation,* first, because He delivered us from eternal death. Nay, as far as in Him lies, He delivers all men and pays a most abundant ransom for them; sufficient to redeem an infinite number of sinners and efface an infinity of sins.

Second. God is called *Our Salvation* because He is the cause of all the gifts of grace and of all the good works by which we merit eternal salvation. The whole mechanism of this world is directed to that one end: our eternal salvation. All things are for the elect.

Third. God is called our *Salvation,* because He is the author and source of all the gifts of glory in which eternal salvation formally consists, namely the vision and enjoyment of God.

Finally, God justly bears that title because He is Himself the object of eternal salvation. On Him depend the whole essence of eternal life, its excellence, its sweetness and its endless duration. To see Him, to love Him, to enjoy Him is life eternal both for Himself and for all the saints.

CHAPTER XLIV.

God Our Glory.

GOD is called *Our Glory,* because He is its *cause* and *object.* He is its *cause* because He is the cause of all those things in which we can in any way find glory in this life and also because He is the cause of that sublime and eternal glory of the world to come, and of all those divine gifts of which it will, so to speak, be the splendor. He is its *object* because He is Himself the object, the measure and the source of all glory, and of that most blessed state, in which all the blessed who behold, love, and enjoy Him will be deified and made like unto Him, resplendent with the glory of the Divinity. For the Divinity is so great a good, that to see, love and enjoy it is sovereign and eternal glory.

Jesus Christ is also called *Our Glory,* because He is the *meritorious cause* of it; for all glory is contained in His merits. They are its fruitful source and from those merits glory is diffused upon us.

He may also be called *Our Glory* in as much as He is our head, and we are His members; just as the Blessed Virgin is called the glory of the heavenly, Judith the glory of the terrestrial Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XLV.

God Our Peace.

GOD is called *Our Peace,* first, in as much as He is the author of all peace and of all rest of soul, for He is the author of every good thing that men desire and in the possession of which they rest.

Second. Jesus Christ is called especially *Our Peace* because He is the author of that great reconciliation with God and the justice of God which threatened us with eternal damnation. Moreover He has so reconciled us that not only has He averted the wrath of God but has changed us from the enemies that we were into children of God and heirs of His kingdom.

Third. Jesus Christ is also called *Our Peace,* because He has thrown down the barrier that was raised between Jews and Gentiles. He has united them and as the Apostle says made them one people. (Eph. ii.)

Fourth. Jesus Christ is moreover called *Our Peace* because spiritual consolation and peace comes to us from Him and it is by Him that we hope for eternal life and the blessed rest of our souls.

Fifth. Finally God is called *Our Peace* because He is the fulfilment of all our desires, and the most perfect rest of our souls; beyond Him there is nothing else to be desired. All that our souls can desire in accordance with right reason, they will possess most fully in God for ever.

CHAPTER XLVI.

God Our Father.

GOD is called *Our Father,* first, because He has formed us to His image and likeness, and made us capable of His Divinity. Hence our soul by its understanding, memory and will possesses a certain grandeur and a boundless capacity by which it can attain to, and grasp objects that are infinite. I say *infinite* because it can continue endlessly to comprehend new things, and in vast numbers so that there is never any limit to its powers in this respect. I say more; by the light of glory it can be so expanded that it can contain within itself even the immensity of God. In that we find a great resemblance to God as of a son or daughter to the father.

Moreover as God can create things infinitely and place them in actual being, so the soul can create them infinitely by forming in itself intelligible entities or concepts of infinite things. By such concepts these things receive a certain objective and intelligible being in the mind.

All this suggests the immensity of the soul and its resemblance to God. He therefore may be justly called *Our Father.* He gave Himself this

name in Deuteronomy xxxii, when He said: "Is He not Thy Father who has possessed thee, who has made thee, who has created thee?"

Third. God is called *Our Father* in the Lord's Prayer and in may parts of the New Testament, on account of His gifts of grace, namely Faith, Hope and Charity, by which we are assimilated to Him in a noble and more perfect manner. But the crowning point of this resemblance is that the Holy Ghost is communicated to us with His gifts in order that He might abide in us and by His presence sanctify us, protect us, govern us, etc. In that manner God makes us His adopted children by communicating to us His nature and His Spirit by the gift of grace. To this gift He has in a certain fashion attached His Divine Spirit as we have more fully explained elsewhere. (Lib. xii, de Perfect., c. ii.) For sonship arises from a certain communication of nature.

Third. God is called *Our Father* because of the gifts of glory by which we are assimilated to Him in the highest and most perfect manner, to such a degree, in fact, that there can be no real and interior resemblance to God greater than it. By these gifts the divine filiation is completed in us. It began in some respect by creation, as in its root; it was elevated by justification to a

higher and more supernatural degree, and rising still higher by glorification, which is the sublimest degree, it consummates in us the resemblance to God and confers on us the plenitude of sonship. Because of this, all the blessed are called the *children of God,* and God is called *the Father of the ages to come.*

Finally, God is called *Our Father,* because of His paternal providence which governs and acts with us. He is like a prince who treats his subjects as a father treats his children, and who is for that reason called the Father of his Country. "As a father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear Him." (Ps. cii). "Thy Providence, O Father, governeth all." (Wis. xiv.)

CHAPTER XLVII.

The Jealous God.

Dionys. c. 4.

JEALOUSY signifies sometimes the ardent love one has for another; sometimes the indignation one feels against what is hurtful to the object loved; and also refers to the effort made to avert danger and to destroy the aggressor.

God is therefore called *Jealous,* first, because loving Himself and His glory with an infinite love, He is angry and profoundly indignant against those who despise Him by committing sin; He is especially angry with those who transfer to idols the glory which is His. Hence we find in the 20th Chapter of Exodus, that after having forbidden His people to adore strange gods, He adds these words: "I am the Lord, thy God, mighty, *jealous,* visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon their children unto the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me." And in Chapter 34 we read: "Adore not any strange god. The Lord His name is *Jealous;* He is a *Jealous* God."

Second. He takes the name of the *Jealous*

God, because He pursues with indignation and is intent upon removing whatever hinders the salvation of souls whom He loves as His spouses and His daughters and whose salvation He sovereignly desires.

Third. Because as a *Jealous* Spouse, He is indignant against souls consecrated to His service if they love anything outside of Himself and for any other reason than for Him; or if they delight in things of the world and do not apply themselves to please Him in everything.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

God the Judge of the Living and the Dead.

GOD is called the *Judge of All,* first, because He judges all souls as soon as they leave the body. That judgment proceeds thus: At the first instant the soul is separated from the body, it beholds all the good and all the evil it has done. At the same moment it sees clearly whether it has merited punishment or reward. In the third place, the sentence of God who is the Judge is revealed to it, in consequence of which it is condemned to eternal punishment or rewarded with eternal happiness. This sentence is pronounced by a divine act which forms a judgment in the soul such as would be uttered by the spoken word of an infallible judge. In that way God speaks to spiritual creatures and they know instantaneously and with absolute certainty that this judgment comes from God and is His sentence. We have elsewhere explained at length how good and evil deeds are represented to the mind and how the soul sees itself worthy of chastisement or reward. (Lib. de Perfect., cxxii v. 137 et seq.) All that is done by the act which God by a special concurrence excites in the understanding. They are like a picture in the imagination, or acts of

perfect memory, by which we as it were contemplate the past with all its attendant circumstances. Hence at that tribunal there will be no need of accuser or witnesses, because each one's conscience will accuse itself, and will testify most exactly to everything. It will be moreover in the presence of all the saints. Their vision of it will be most clear and they will serve as witnesses. It is believable also that the demons will have the same knowledge so that they may see how just is the judgment of God. For if on the day of General Judgment the actions of all are to be manifested to every one in order that the justice of God may appear, why, at the particular judgment, should they not be manifested to the demons who share the punishment of the reprobate and who appear as executioners at that tribunal of divine justice. Hence when the sentence is pronounced which the demons understand, the condemned are dragged to the depths of hell, where they will be so closely guarded that they can neither escape, nor avoid suffering. This judgment takes only an instant, even as is credible, before the soul withdraws from the body.

Moreover, as at every hour, many in the world are dying, the judgments of this tribunal are in some sort continuous. Nor is that difficult, for the Infinite Spirit of God which is intimately

present in the souls of all, knows perfectly what they have done, can easily place the record before each soul that He judges, and write the sentence in its innermost depths.

Second. God is called the *Judge of All,* because by a public judgment at the end of the world, He will judge all men and all the demons of hell in presence of all the blessed angels. However this name, the *Judge of All,* is more properly ascribed to Christ who has been made by the Father, the Judge of that great day. He will exercise that judicial power according to His Humanity and in the most visible manner. Hence Daniel (c. vii) says: "I beheld therefore in the vision of the night and lo! one like the Son of Man came with clouds of heaven and He came even to the Ancient of Days and they presented Him before Him. And He gave Him power and glory, and a kingdom. (Dan. vii.)

But it will be by the power of the Divinity that all men will rise again and find themselves all together with the demons in the place where the Judgment will take place.

It will also be by the power of God that all will remember their words and works, all of which will be seen by every one else, and each one will understand the justice of the sentence.

Meantime while by the power of the Divinity

all that passes unseen in the understanding of those who are to be judged, Christ, appearing in the clouds, according to His Humanity, will be surrounded by all the angels and in His supreme majesty will pronounce in a few words that will be heard by all, the sentence of the elect and of the reprobate, and at the same time by the power of the Divinity, He will cause to be heard in the soul of each the sentence that is in keeping with what it has deserved.

We have treated this matter at greater length in Book xiii of *The Divine Perfections.*

CHAPTER XLIX.

God the Father of the World to Come.

THIS name applies to Christ in two ways: according to His Humanity and according to His Divinity, and in as much as it is made to refer to His Divinity, it is applicable also to the Blessed Trinity.

Christ is therefore called *The Father of the World to Come,* first, because He is the Author and Father of all the just and of all the children of God who were to live in the future under the New Testament. He is also the author of all the blessings connected with that covenant.

For just as all the Jews according to the flesh are descended from Jacob by his twelve sons, the Patriarchs of the Old Law, so all the just who are the Jews and Israelites according to the spirit, are descended from Jesus Christ, the true Israel, by the twelve Apostles, the Patriarchs of the New Testament. From the point of view of the Old Testament the time of the New is called "the world to come" and was for ages the object of supreme and universal expectation.

Second. Christ is called in a still higher sense *Father of the World to Come* because He is the Author and Father of all the blessed who after the resurrection are to reign forever in heaven.

From Him they received all their gifts; He delivered them from eternal death; He merited for them all the means of salvation and all the grace that was needed for eternal life. He is therefore the author of all the glory of body and soul with which they shine in heaven. And He Himself will be resplendent among the saints like the sun among the stars. Because also His merits are for men the cause of that most blessed state and of all the glory with which they are to be crowned in heaven, He is justly called the *Father of the World to Come.*

Third. He is also called the *Father of the World to Come* according to His Divinity. For it is His Divinity that was the cause of the ransom of the human race, and it is because of his Divinity that His merits have power to save us.

Finally the Divinity is the principal efficient cause of all the gifts of grace and glory as well as of the state of glory which is ultimately secured. Hence it follows that Christ as God is the *Father of the World to Come,* not only in as much as that world embraces the blessed but also the angels. For the angels have all their glory and all their resemblance to the Divinity from Christ, not in as much as He is Man, but in as much as He is God. Thus all the children of God are deified by the gifts of His glory.

CHAPTER L.

God the Last End.

HE is the First Beginning of all things and is likewise their *Last End.* For the First Beginning, acting and producing something outside of itself, can have for its object and its last end the good of no other being but itself. The reason is because all other beings are infinitely beneath Him. Hence it follows that their good is not of a kind that God, as the First Beginning could rest in ultimately. Such a good is as if it were not. For all beings compared to Him are as nothing. He should therefore have in view as His last end, His own good; that is His own glory, because we cannot conceive any other greater good that could be the term of His gaze or His desire. For all the glory of God in as much as it is a divine possession ought to be infinitely more estimable than any created good.

There are two sorts of ends: the end *which,* and the end *for which.* The first is the good which one desires and for the acquisition of which one works; the second is the person whose good is therein desired.

In this latter sense God is the *Last End* of all

things, because it is He for whose love and glory all things are created, and it is exclusively for His glory that He wishes and makes all things and permits all that He permits. According to the words of Scripture: "The Lord has made all things for Himself; the wicked also for the evil day." (Prov. xvi, 4) God destines the wicked to eternal punishment in order to manifest the divine justice and glory.

God is in a special manner in the two senses just explained the last end of rational creatures. For rational nature alone is capable of Him, and it alone has been created to enjoy God as its greatest good. There is nothing more excellent for it to desire. Hence it ought to desire and seek God as its sovereign good, in every possible way; and that, for its advantage, namely to enjoy Him and delight in His sweetness.

God is also the *Last End* of rational creatures in the second sense spoken of above, because all the blessed must refer their beatitude and all they have to His glory. This they do incessantly; for they esteem their beatitude, their glory and all they possess as more properly God's own than as belonging to themselves.

Hence the blessed rejoice in their glory and their possessions in two ways; first, by regarding these possession as their own and as bestowing

upon them the greatest honor, the greatest joy and the greatest sweetness such as none of their own intrinsic perfections could impart; and secondly, by considering them as the good that belongs to God and appertaining to His everlasting glory and praise. This is the principal joy they draw from their beatitude and the gifts of glory. And this beatitude is not only their supreme perfection, their supreme excellence and their objective glory, but is also the formal glory of God. For them to know God, to love Him and to enjoy Him is His formal extrinsic glory, and the greatest that can be conceived. It is besides the intrinsic glory of the saints and their beatitude. Hence they esteem their intrinsic beatitude incomparably more for the reason that it is the good and the glory of God than because it is their own.

Finally, God is called the *Last End* of rational creatures because all the angels and all the blessed during all eternity will so rest in His vision, in His love, and in the beatific enjoyment of Him, that they can desire nothing beyond; but will find in Him the term of all their desires, and will enjoy in Him a most blessed repose.

MEDITATIVE SUMMARIES

OF THE

DIVINE PERFECTIONS

Preface.

NOT a few theological students are under the impression that what is called Speculative Theology is of very little use. They pay no attention to it during their course, and when their studies are over drop it altogether. They say they want something practical; as if Speculative Theology were a barren field, and the territory they choose to cultivate productive of abundant harvests.

This is a serious error and deprives them of knowledge that is both delightful and useful. For in the first place Speculative Theology is by far the noblest and most estimable section of the science of Divinity. More than any other it deserves the name of Theology, for the reason that its purpose is the consideration and study of eternal things. Now it is assuredly better to know even a little about the perfections of God such as the mystery of the Holy Trinity, the creation and conservation of the universe, the cooperation of God with creatures, the Incarnation, the Eucharist, the vision of God, and eternal life than to possess the most exhaustive knowledge of created things, of human inventions and human institutions. They are of no use except for the present life.

Moreover Speculative Theology not only affords a great deal of consolation if we only know how to avail ourselves of its teachings, but can lift us up to the highest perfection and sublimest sanctity. Theology is not, as some imagine, merely a battleground for scholastic disputations. Its chief purpose is our spiritual good and the fashioning of our life as Christians. By the study of the Divine Perfections, the soul rises towards God, contemplates Him, admires, fears, venerates, loves and perpetually praises and blesses Him. By walking always in His presence we shape and mould our entire life according to His good pleasure, and in obedience to the least sign of His will.

Hence these sublime mysteries should frequently occupy our thoughts, and our soul should be constantly exercised in the contemplation of the wonders this study reveals. Moreover as such study supposes profound reverence and an intellectual submission we must frequently implore the divine assistance and the light of the Holy Spirit. For without that help and illumination all our labor would be both fruitless and useless.

Besides, although all Theology teaches what is conducive to a pious and holy life, nothing draws us so powerfully away from the love of perishable

things and influences our heart with the desire of what is celestial and eternal as the meditation of the divine perfections. Theology will reign in the world to come as the unchallenged queen and mistress of all the sciences. There the science that regards only what are called the practical things of the present world will cease; and it is surely of advantage for us while we are living in this world to have a foretaste of the joys of heaven. That is what Speculative Theology accomplishes. It teaches men to live here below as they will one day live in the blessed company of the angels.

St. Denis the Areopagite exhorted his disciple St. Timothy to practice this kind of meditation. He considered it to be the sublimest height of all wisdom and all virtue. "My dear Timothy," he says, "fix the eyes of thy soul continually on the mystical union. I mean the divine perfections. Remove thyself from the senses and intellectual operations, in fine from all sensible and intelligible things; from all that is and from all that is not in order to raise thyself in a manner one knows not how to a union, as far as the soul is capable of it, with Him who is above all things and above all knowing."

St. Denis is here speaking of that most excellent mode of contemplation by which after con-

sidering the divine perfections most attentively, in as much as they present themselves to it as limited to a certain species and as distinct from each other, the soul rises to something more sublime and limitless, and infinitely more noble; to something which embraces not merely the divine perfections as the created mind conceives them, but the Divine Being Itself, and in *an unknown manner* unites itself to Him by contemplation and love.[1]

Finally the knowledge of the divine perfections is the supreme and first rule of all sanctity and all perfection in the life of rational beings, both angels and men. If this knowledge is perfect, it alone suffices to acquire the supreme perfection of every virtue. "For to know Thee is perfect justice; and to know Thy Justice and Thy power is the root of immortality." (Wis. xiv.) In

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[1]This union with God by sublime contemplation is described as taking place in an *unknown manner,* because it is not made by contemplating any form (essence, nature) or anything conceivable by us, such as life, wisdom, power, goodness, eternity, etc., but by withdrawing the mind from all such things, and by considering God who is infinitely beyond anything that can be conceived. This supereminence of God which can in no wise be conceived by us under any form, St. Denis calls the *divine darkness* and the superessential life. For us it is darkness, because it is conceived by the negation of every intelligible essence or nature; but in itself it is more resplendent than any light. (*Ex. Lib. De Summo Bono nn.* 93, 94, *Lessius.*)

effect the knowledge of God is the supreme and absolute rule of perfect and consummate justice. This justice it excites in the heart, and after having excited it, augments it and after having augmented it, perfects it. These words of the Gospel of St. John: "Now this is eternal life. That they may know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent," (John, xvii) signify nothing else than that this knowledge is the rule of all rectitude by which we are most certainly conducted to eternal life. The Apostle declares it also when he so often prays with such ardent desire and earnest supplication that the faithful should *increase in the knowledge of God.* God Himself recommends it to Abraham when He says: "Walk in My presence and be perfect" (Gen. xvii.) What else does He indicate and inculcate except that by an assiduous consideration of the presence of God and the divine perfections we may acquire the virtues and perfections of life. That is the reason why the saints showed so much zeal and resorted to so many devices and made so many efforts to walk continually in the presence of God.

Here also we may include the manner in which Christ acted and which He bids us to imitate: "Love your enemies," He tells us; "do good to those who hate you and be the children of your

Father who is in heaven who maketh the sun to rise upon the good and the wicked, and raineth upon the just and the unjust. Be therefore perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. Be merciful as your heavenly Father is merciful." The Apostle follows the example of Christ when he exhorts the Ephesians (and in speaking to them he addresses us), to be imitators of God as most loving sons and to walk in love as Christ loved us and delivered Himself up for us.

From all this it is clear that the consideration of the divine perfections is a most excellent rule of all perfection and of all sanctity. If this is clearly kept before our minds we need no other rule.

But just as the knowledge of the presence of God and the meditation of the divine acts lead to all virtues and the perfection of life, so on the other hand ignorance of God and the habit of never considering Him at all constitute the source of every vice, of every turpitude and of every sin. As the Psalmist says: "The fool hath said in his heart: 'There is no God.' They are corrupt and become abominable in their ways, and there is none that doeth good, not one." For who is the man, no matter how forgetful he may be of his salvation who would not hesitate to commit a crime if he weighed attentively the displeasure it

causes God, or if he thought that God was present, menacing him with the divine anger and the curse of eternal damnation.

The reason why the knowledge of God is the rule of virtue is evident. The perfection of man consists in union with God, his first beginning and his last end. Now this union originates in knowledge. It is the foundation of all union with God. As St. Denis expresses it—the first union with God begins by the intelligence. From that follows the union of heart by hope, charity and religion. There follows also the union of all the other powers of the soul, in as much as their effective operations are directed to God, namely to His glory. The blessed inhabitants of heaven know no other law; a fact that is worthy of our serious consideration. All their affections and all their movements are formed after the sole and perfect rule of the knowledge of God. From that rule all other rules of a just and holy life derive their correctness. By that rule the doctrine and the life of Jesus Christ is shaped. From that rule emanate as from their source all the teachings and examples of the saints, and what confirms this still more, all laws and all rules are derived from the eternal law. Now the eternal law results from the Divine Essence, just as every natural law in angels and men results

from their rational nature. Therefore the knowledge of the Divinity is the first and supreme rule of all perfection.

Finally to the knowledge of God we must join the knowledge of ourselves. By contrasting our imperfection and misery with the perfection and majesty of God we estimate the distance between both, and after we have dissipated the clouds of self-love we may know clearly what is to be given to God and what to ourselves. By this comparison of human baseness with divine splendor it will be easy to know what our duty to God is, and what our duty to ourselves demands. On our side is evil and imperfection; on God's all that is good and perfect. Hence all love is due to God's goodness, and all honor to His perfection; whereas punishment is the proper thing for our malice, as contempt is for our baseness.

We divide this work into fourteen books. We shall not follow the scholastic method, but will adopt an easier style in order that these mysteries may not only be placed before the mind of the reader with as much splendor as possible for the enlightenment of their minds, but also that feelings of piety may be excited in their hearts and they may be filled with awe, admiration, love and joy. While avoiding scholastic subtleties we shall endeavor to explain everything by reason,

by the authority of the Holy Fathers and especially by Scripture so that without much reading, what we say may furnish abundant material for meditation. For the attentive consideration of a few things illumines the mind more and touches the heart quicker than prolix reading and elaborate argumentations.

This treatise was written thirteen or fourteen years ago, except the two last books on Justice and the Last end. The work was originally undertaken at the suggestion of Father Flerontini a man much given to spiritual things. When I gave him the manuscript, I was not much concerned about making the additions referred to above. Besides, other occupations were not lacking. I trust that the edition which is now brought out may enkindle in the reader the light of understanding and the fire of love.

CHAPTER I.

The Infinity of God.

O LORD GOD! Great and terrible art Thou! God of immeasurable majesty! Thou art an infinite ocean of being, of goodness and of beatitude, compassing in Thyself all being and all good; anticipating it from all eternity, possessing it before it existed; for Thou art the source of all being. Thou art the foundation of all possible things. Thou are the superessential Being of all beings, both of those that are and of those that are not. Without Thee nothing can exist either in act or in potency, or can even be conceived by any understanding. Thou art the beginning of all beings, the end of all beings, their Creator, their support, their place, their duration, their term, their order, their connection, their harmony and their consummation.

All the good that is in men and angels is in Thee, and also the good of every purpose or end of all beings, both of those that are and those that are not. In Thee reside all glory and dignity and riches and treasures; all sweetness and consolation, all joy and all beatitude. Thou art

my God and my All; the God of my heart; my portion and my God for all eternity.

May all passing things be regarded by me as vile for Thy sake; may everything that regards Thee be dear to me, and Thou, My God, more dear than all. For what is all the rest when compared to Thy excellence? What is all else but a cloud and a shadow and a vain thing? All the riches and all the delights and all the glory of the world which so miserably fascinate the eyes of men are as nothing, and only prevent us from knowing and seeking our true good in Thee. As one who in sleep dreams of riches and pleasures and honors, and awakes only to discover that it was a delusion; so will it happen to those who love the world. When the slumber of this life is broken they will awaken in the light of a different world.

Let me therefore, O my God! esteem none of the things that pass. Let me esteem Thee alone, and the treasures that are hidden in Thee. They are Thyself; and those who despise the perishable things of earth, and cleave to Thee alone will enjoy Thee for ever.

Let me love Thee above all things, and serve Thee always, because Thou art infinitely better than all things and most worthy of being loved, cherished, revered, served and glorified by all creatures for all eternity.

CHAPTER II.

The Immensity of God.

LORD! How great Thou art and how worthy of all praise! Of Thy greatness there is no end. Thou art higher than the heavens, more extended than the ocean, more profound than the abyss. Thou fillest all, Thou encompassest all. Thou dost hold the universe as a little globe in the hollow of Thy hand. As a philosopher has well said (if indeed he understood it in a sane sense), Thou art an incomprehensible sphere whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere.

Thou occupiest all the space of all the places that are within and without the world. Thou art Thyself the foundation, the site, the space of all space. Thou extendest primarily and establishest the immensity of all space and of all the intervals therein, both possible and actual, in Thy quality of the first foundation upon which all else is built. Thou extendest not only the heavens and capacious vastnesses of this world, but in a still more marvellous way, Thou extendest that space itself in which Thou hast established the world by no other span than that of Thy magni-

tude. That limitless magnitude is the first and the fundamental capacity and the spaciousness or the potential extension in which all other space can be, and by reason of which the boundlessness of space is imaginable by the created mind, just as Thine eternity is the first and original duration and conceivable foundation of things that endure.

Not only by the immense diffusion of Thy Being dost Thou occupy limitless space, superarching and subtending its abyss, but Thou art moreover in all beings and in all places of this universe, in each one in particular, and in whatever points of it may be designated. Thou art there present with all Thy Divine Being, altogether and entire within it. Thou art there with all Thy power, Thy wisdom, Thy goodness, and all Thy perfections; with all Thy gifts, with all Thy treasures, to adorn and render happy all Thy creatures.

Thou art hidden entire in every being, incessantly creating all things, forming them, conserving them in all the luminousness of being; else they would fall back again into their proper darkness and nothingness; and finally, Thou drawest them to Thyself by the inclination to good that Thou hast implanted in them.

Convert my heart to Thee, from within,

I implore Thee, down to the innermost depths of my being. There let the noise of all creatures die, and all the tumult of importunate thoughts cease. Let me abide in Thee; let me see Thee ever present; let me love and revere Thee; let me hear Thy voice; let me lay bare to Thee the miseries of my exile and let me find consolation in Thee. Let me never lose sight of Thy presence, O Light and Sweetness of my soul! Let me never forget Thee, but on what ever side I turn let the eyes of my soul ever fall upon Thee. Being present entirely in each place, Thou dost shed the rays of Thy presence upon all beings. For as the soul of man that cannot be seen betrays itself by the movements and acts which the body performs making us fully aware of its presence, so O Lord! do Thou who art the Supervital Life and the Superessential Being of all beings, show Thyself in a way that will be manifest in the beauty of Thy creatures which are brilliant mirrors of Thine admirable wisdom and power.

For what in effect are all creatures but a certain impression and as it were a copy of Thine eternal thought. Thou art the primordial and universal seal, and all creatures are the resulting impressions produced by that seal. Nor dost Thou impress Thyself on matter that abides and retains this signet mark after the seal is removed,

but on what is as it were fluid and evanescent and tending to nothingness. Indeed no creature can exist a single instant if Thy seal is withdrawn from it. That it may continue to exist, there is needed from Thee a continual presence and a continual impression. Thus then, O my Lord! shall I recognize Thy presence in all creatures, because Thou art hidden in each of them and givest incessantly to them their being, their rank and their beauty.

Grant me, moreover, to understand with all the saints the length and breadth and height and depth of Thy Divinity; so that having no more affection for myself, I may plunge into that infinite ocean and lose myself therein along with all that is created, thinking of nothing outside of what I meet in those depths, feeling nothing, loving nothing, seeking nothing more than to rest in Thee alone, possessing all things in Thee alone, and enjoying all good in Thee alone. For just as Thine Essence is infinite and measureless, so every good that is in Thee is infinite and without bounds. Who can be greedy to such a point that infinite and limitless good will not satisfy him? Let me therefore seek nothing outside of Thee, and be Thou to me all things and above all things. O God of my heart! O God! who art mine inheritance for all eternity!

CHAPTER III.

The Immutability of God.

"TO Thee O King of ages, immortal, invisible, the Only God" and my Sovereign Master "be honor and glory" (I Tim. i; James i) from all creatures in heaven and on earth and above all creatures, in the highest and most inaccessible light of Thy wisdom and Divinity. Thou art the author of all immortality and all stability. Thou art the adhesiveness and the bond of every creature.

It is by Thee that angelic natures and reasonable beings are immortal and indestructible. Through Thee the heavens possess their "strength as if they were of molten brass" (Job. xxxvii, 18). By Thee the earth as an immobile centre, "standeth forever" (Eccl. i, 4) balanced by its own weight in the midst of the universe. By Thee the indissoluble nature of the elements and of matter persist. Thou hast with Thy mighty hand imprinted beauty upon all creatures that no art can ever rob them of. Thou guardest them intrinsically with such a power and Thou communicatest to them such a potent force of cohesion that no violence can ever disintegrate or disunite them.

Thou art not only the author of immortality and stability, but Thou art, besides, the primary and supreme origin of all movement both corporeal and spiritual. For nothing visible is done in the vast commonwealth of the world that is not ordained or permitted in the invisible counsel of Thy sovereign Majesty. There is decreed the ineffable distribution of Thy gifts, recompenses, and punishments, and the apportionment of the sorrows and joys and the other vicissitudes of this life.

All the plans and arrangements of things subject to change are in Thee without change, and the origins of all things temporal are eternal in Thee. Once before all the ages Thou didst determine upon all things; once for all Thou didst speak, and by the power of that statute or ordinance Thou didst open the series of the ages and didst determine everything that in due course should come to light in its proper time and place. The order of time is in Thee without time; and there can be nothing new for Thee who from all eternity hast made all future things. Thou hast made them, I mean in Thy predestination of them; in that decree which ordains or permits them; and in that infallible foreknowledge which sees all things as if they were present.

In Thee is the plenitude of all good, preexisting

and anterior to all the ages. To it nothing can be added, and from it nothing can be taken away. Thou possessest simultaneously from the beginning all that can be added in the infinite succession of ages, and Thou canst lose nothing, because by Thine Essence, Thou hast and art everything. Thou dost not need our service; there can be to Thee no advantage in our salvation, nor can our damnation be to Thy detriment. Even if the whole world should perish, Thou nevertheless wouldst lose naught thereby and Thy glory and Thy beatitude would suffer no diminution nor be in any way impaired.

But in spite of that, Thou dost love us with an eternal and infinite love. There is nothing Thou wouldst not do to save us and make us participants in Thy beatitude. Nay, when we wandered away from Thee, Thou didst not abandon us. Thou didst call us back again in a thousand ways as a tender father who calls after his fugitive children, promising pardon, so that we might not fall into eternal misery.

O! the immense sweetness of Thy Spirit which prompts Thee to show such benignity to us, not only when we merit naught but even when we are ungrateful and rebellious; when we do not cease to offend Thee and repay with evil the infinite favors Thou bestowest upon us.

Illumine our darkness, O! Primordial Light! Remove from the eyes of our souls the foolish fascination of this world's trifles which perverts the simple sense. Let us perceive clearly the difference between what is perishable and what is immortal, what passes and what abides, the goods of this world and those of the world to come. Let us despise the former and strive to attain and cleave to the latter. Remove from us all inconstancy of mind that we may not waver in our good resolutions, or ever abandon what we have once begun. For nothing is more harmful to spiritual advancement than that instability of soul which is never fixed and which at the slightest breath sways like a reed in the wind.

Let a ray of Thy light illumine the lofty summits of our soul, and do Thou draw our mind on high towards Thee, above the spheres of all changing things, above all the ways of the sun and of the years, and above all created things. Enchain it to Thee by the indissoluble bond of love, so that neither death, nor life, nor poverty, nor riches, nor glory, nor ignominy, nor pleasure, nor pain, nor height, nor depth, nor the gates of hell itself, nor all the torments of the demon, may ever wrest us from Thine arms or separate us from Thee.

CHAPTER IV.

The Eternity of God.

"BEFORE the mountains were made or the earth, and the world was formed; from eternity unto eternity Thou art God." (Ps. lxxxix). Thou art the Beginning and the Maker of all things. Thou art therefore before all things. Not by any necessity of Thy nature didst Thou create this universe, this vast palace with its inhabitants and its riches, so that Thou mightest have something coeternal with Thee. It is not as with the sun and its rays. It was with sovereign liberty, and as its supreme artificer, that Thou didst form the design of it and didst shape it according to Thy good pleasure. Thou art therefore more ancient than Thy work which is not six thousand years old. And how many centuries older art Thou? Nor can this question seem strange even if before the world was made there were no centuries in which Thou wert, and in which Thou wert in the enjoyment of all good. For although before the creation of the heavens and earth, there were no phases of the sun and moon which measure our days, our months and our years, and by which we know the brief space

of time that our possessions last, we can not however doubt, unless we wish to dispute about words, that there were durations and spaces like our days and months and years and centuries, through which those movements could have extended and run their course if they had then existed, just as after this world has come to an end and the movements of the planets have ceased, all the duration and lapses of time will not thereby be abolished.

Let us conceive an extent of time by going back a hundred thousand centuries before the creation of the world. Thou, O my God already wert. Let us add to this many millions of centuries, and Thou wert before all that time, as great, as powerful, as wise, as happy as Thou art now. Finally let us figure in imagination a still greater and greater multitude of centuries which are ever and always receding into the past, and we shall find that Thou wert still there, more ancient than an infinity of ages and always with Thine infinite possessions and Thy sovereign beatitude.

For Thou art the foundation, the beginning and the measure of all the ages. Thine eternity precedes and dominates them all, and beneath Thee they roll onward in their course. As by Thine immensity Thou reachest forth encompassing and containing all space, so by Thine eternity,

Thou dost precede, anticipate, encompass and span the spaces and extents of time as the root and origin of all times. For beneath Thee are inaugurated all the beginnings of things, all progress that is made, all life that flows, all movements that advance, all existence that endures, all ends that are reached, and all boundaries that circumscribe.

O Eternity! Thou art the primordial and unending reunion of all that is good; the total, perfect and simultaneous possession of a life that can never grow old; the supereminently complete fruition without beginning and without end of all happiness. For Thee there is no past nor future; for Thee there is no possible augmentation nor decrease. From the altitude of Thy *Now,* that actual moment which embraces infinite time, Thou gatherest together all things at once. Thou holdest them all present in such wise that they cannot flee away to the past, nor arrive at any thing new in the future. Thou precedest and anticipatest all things, present, past and future, and they are already present to Thee before they can have aught of the future in their being. For although whatever was to be in the future was such from all eternity, nevertheless it would not have been so, hadst Thou not known it, and either wished or permitted it.

In Thy *Now* all things are once for all considered and decreed. In it all counsel about all things is held and concluded. No deliberation remains to be made; all have been thoroughly scrutinized and examined. What is ever to be or not to be has been defined and decided. In that *Now* we have been numbered and weighed, and all our works have been placed in the balance; in it everlasting glory or everlasting punishment is decreed for us; there we either reign with the saints in glory or burn in hell with the demons and the reprobate. The eternity of Thy foreknowledge and of Thy decree precedes and anticipates all things, and all that is to be done in time has there been already done.

O Eternity! Abyss of joy for the saints, abyss of misery and pain for sinners! For as Thou makest all things infinitely better and more desirable so Thou renderest all evil infinitely more painful and more terrible. What spirit can comprehend Thy greatness; what strength of soul sustain Thy weight? Thou crushest down all pride; Thou shatterest all hardness; Thou curbest all rebellion; Thou terrifiest all sinners and fortifiest all the just in their tribulations by pouring out in their soul a joy that is ineffable. "For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure,

exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." (II Cor. iv). For the suffering of a moment we receive good that is everlasting; for a tribulation that is light, an immense weight of glory; for earthly affliction glory in heaven. Who would prefer to endure an everlasting punishment rather than deprive himself in this life of an enjoyment that lasts only for a moment? Who would prefer earthly things which are so vile and fleeting to those of heaven which are so sublime and which endure for ever?

O Eternity! Be Thou ever present to my mind. Inhere in my innermost sense; be the rule of all my actions and of all my life; make me think of Thee so as to despise and regard as evil all that passes, be it of weal or woe; be my solace in all suffering; my help in all temptations; my light and counsel in prosperity.

To Thee who art the Beginning of all beginnings and more ancient than them all, who art the Father of the ages, the King of the centuries, the dispenser of all time, the basis of all that subsists and abides and who givest a blessed eternity at the last, be all honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER V.

The Omnipotence of God.

HOW adorable and tremendous is Thine Omnipotence! How it should be contemplated in the silence of religious and reverential awe! O Lord! King of the Ages! Thou canst do of Thyself whatever all Thy creatures united can do. By Thee is established and on Thee depends whatever there is of power, of strength and of energy in all things. With one word Thou hast created all things from nothing, and after having drawn them from naught Thou didst keep them in being by Thy substantific concurrence, and didst hold them as it were suspended by the hand of Thy power and didst prevent them from falling back into their original nothingness.

Before Thee the universe is like an imperceptible atom, and all the nations like a drop of dew that falls before the rising of the sun. Thou canst do and execute not only what all men and all angels can conceive in their minds, but also whatever Thine own infinite wisdom can conceive. For Thy power is equal to Thy wisdom and coextensive with it in its outpouring.

Thy wisdom is the sole rule and the sole meas-

ure of Thine omnipotence, and what other measure can a measureless power be guided by than a measure which has no limit?

Hence it follows that Thou holdest and possessest no less the things that have not actually been brought into being but also those which actually exist and which appear in their nature and species. They remained hidden in the treasure-house of Thy power and wisdom, until they heard the summons that bade them stand forth and utter the words: "Behold us ready to do Thy will."

Thou hast no need either of our praise or of our service. Didst Thou wish it, Thou wouldst have on the instant an infinity of servants who would worship Thee incomparably better than we, and give Thee praise of every kind.

Do Thou penetrate my soul with the most profound sentiments of respect and humility in presence of Thy power which is so great, since Thou canst, O my God! dispose of me and of all creatures according to Thy good pleasure, and there is none that can say: "Why hast Thou done this?" All things are Thine and the work of Thy hands. Be always present in my thoughts, O my God! Let me ever see the hand of Thine omnipotence extended, menacing me with the lightning of eternal damnation if I am

rash enough to violate Thy holy law. Give me also a serene confidence in Thee that I may fear no one but Thee, and let no creature avail to separate me from Thy love. For what are all things in Thy presence? And in what can they harm me without Thy permission? If Thou permittest that I should be afflicted by some one, deign that it may be for my salvation and a means to merit eternal life. Amen!

CHAPTER VI.

The Wisdom of God.

ILLUMINE my eyes O Primordial Light; dissipate the darkness of my soul O Eternal Sun. "Send forth Thy light and Thy truth"; that they may conduct me and bring me "unto Thy holy hill and into Thy tabernacles" (Ps. xlii). For Thou art the origin of all light and of all intelligence. Thou art the Author of all understanding, of all reason. Without irradiation from Thee everything would remain buried in the darkness and night of ignorance. All the arts and all the sciences are but feeble rays that emanate from Thee. All the wisdom of the Angels is but a minute spark of Thine infinite light. Thou art the source of all that is beautiful and lovable, of all form and of all beauty, of all order and of all proportion, of all fitness and all agreement, of all sympathy and all aversion. Thou hast created the nature and the species of all beings, Thou hast established in the constituent elements of each its agreement and analogy, its number, and order, its measure and its mode. Thou art the primordial seal of all things. Thou dost penetrate them all by Thy purity and Thy

subtility, forming them all interiorly and coordinating everything that is in each. And although "Thou reachest from end to end," (Wis. viii) that is, from the highest heaven to the profoundest abyss, Thou enterest into all things without mingling with any. Thou art not soiled by their contact but keepest Thy splendor and purity unsullied. Infinite are the ways by which Thou descendest to Thy creatures to form or illumine them and in which Thou diffusest Thyself upon them, and yet Thou remainest in Thine unchangeable identity fixed most firmly above all created things. Innumerable are the revelations Thou hast imparted to us by the lips of Thy servants, as well as by an infinity of signs and symbols through which Thou hast manifested Thyself to the understanding of men, yet by a single and most simple thought Thou accomplishest all things.

Thou art the author and creator of everything, the model, the measure, the end of all. Not only art Thou the author of all things visible and invisible that exist and have already received from Thee the beauty with which Thou hast invested them, but Thou art also the author of those creatures which are not, but which may be created by Thine omnipotence, and they are infinitely more numerous. All of

these beings Thy Thought has seen and formed in itself before the ages, and Thou keepest them in Thy presence although Thou hast decreed never to give them existence by creation outside of Thyself. It is as with a great architect who forms in his mind many designs of a palace and who rejoices and triumphs in these plans which his imagination presents to him, although he has resolved never to reduce them to act.

All the beings which constitute the world of the possibles exist before Thee in supreme perfection and they shine from all eternity in Thy presence no less than those that Thou hast exteriorly created. They are surrounded by Thy light and appear in the order and nature assigned to each of them. Thou rejoicest and dost triumph at the sight of all these beings that Thou beholdest in Thine inaccessible light where Thou possessest them. There they cannot decay nor grow old, nor be obscured by darkness, nor fall from Thy divine hand, but they always subsist in the same immutable and eternal splendor.

O! Admirable Wisdom! To Thee all things past and future are present; to Thee all things of time are eternal; before Thee all things that are feelingless and dead are living, and all things that are not, exist. Thou embracest simultaneously all eternity. Thou exhaustest all infinity and con-

tainest all immensity. All things have within Thee an eternal being and an eternal life, without beginning or end; and they are utterly unchangeable. Each of them, indeed, has in itself, either in act or potency, its own intrinsic being; but this in created things has a beginning and is subject to change; nor does it give life to what is inanimate. But over and above this being which they have in themselves, they have in the divine wisdom and understanding something intrinsic which is, as it were, infused and which is immutable and everlasting. For the conception of things is a certain intelligible entity by which they exist in the mind, and by which they shine and live there as in a spiritual world. Thy wisdom therefore is the being and life and light of intelligible things according to the words of St. John: "Quod factum est, in ipso vita erat." What was made in Him was life. cl, vv 3, 4, which is the meaning given to the text by St. Augustine and other Saints.

All things are in the Divine Essence as in their basis and primordial foundation. They are in the power of God as in their efficient cause which has created all things; they are in His wisdom formally and objectively as in their exemplar or ideal cause.

The Infinite Wisdom first turns towards

the Essence of God, and understands it perfectly, for it is equal to and commensurate with it. From that adequate comprehension of the divine essence proceeds immediately the conception or the representation of all possible things; following that conception is the distinct knowledge of whatever all actual and possible creatures can do; then comes the clear intuition of everything that can be done in all possible suppositions, and finally there is the eternal vision of all things past, present and future.

In this manner and in this order, Thy Wisdom, O Great God! proceeds, as it were, from five spheres of objects and intelligible things, and all that it conceives, it conceives by the power of the adequate comprehension of Thine infinite Essence which is the first cause and the foundation of all possible things. Thus in Thee is found not only the universality of wisdom and intelligence but also the universality of intelligible things and objects.

To Thee, then, O Plenitude of Light! Plenitude of Truth! and Infinite Wisdom of God! be honor and glory from all creatures, and above and beyond all creatures, be honor and glory in Thyself who art the clear and consummate knowledge of the divine excellence. O! Omnipotent God!

Thou makest Thine excellence to shine in the understanding of the Angels and Saints, and in that splendor there is something of Thy glory. But it is infinitely more resplendent in Thy Wisdom, for infinite light is more brilliant than a feeble spark.

Let Thine own wisdom therefore give Thee infinite praise; and let every creature rejoice in it, felicitate it, praise it, bless it, glorify it. Thou hast no need of our glory or our praise; a spark adds nothing to infinite light, but we find our advantage in it, for to know Thee and to praise Thee is our greatest good. It is eternal life.

CHAPTER VII.

The Goodness of God.

THE Lord is good and most lovable. His goodness knows no bounds. Not that He is good in this manner or that, in this or that kind of good, but He is absolutely good without beginning, without end, without limit and without mode or measure. He precedes all good and comprises all good in Himself alone.

This good none has given to Thee that Thou shouldst repay it with gratitude. Thou, O simple and primordial Goodness, hast it of Thyself, and it is from Thee that all things taste the sweetness of what is good for them, according to their grade in creation. For Thou art the plenitude and universality of good, the original source of all good to whom all beings from the highest created substance down to that which is at the ultimate confines of creation are indebted for whatever good they possess.

No creature can find in its own nature all its own good. It needs many things that its nature should be complete and perfect even in its own genus and within the limits of its nature. But Thou by Thy most simple essence hast every excellence, every perfection, every beatitude, every

good and Thou needest naught outside of Thyself.

The good of every creature is restricted and circumscribed within certain bounds. It does not contain within itself the good of anything else. Hence we stand in need of an infinity of things in order to live, because each thing in particular affords us but little of itself. But Thy goodness, that is to say, the good of Thy simple essence is boundless; is overflowing on all sides and supremely sufficient of itself for everything. For as Thou art the primordial source of all things there is naught that can limit or circumscribe the condition of the good that is in Thee. Hence just as Thine essence, Thy power and Thy wisdom are infinite because they are primordial, and flow from no other source, and are consequently boundless, so Thy goodness and Thy perfection are boundless because they precede all goodness and perfection and depend on nothing that might limit them. A nature that is of itself limitless cannot be subjected to any limitation except by an efficient cause. But as the perfections which are in Thee have no efficient cause, they must necessarily know no bounds.

Woe to the wretches who seduced by the manifold kinds and inextricable multitude of baser things seek outside of Thee, with so much care,

worry, labor, and peril of their salvation, the riches, pleasures and honors of this world! They can find them all in Thee in a better and easier manner, not merely as in human things for a fleeting moment but for all eternity. For all things are in Thee. In Thee they are most pure, are enjoyed simultaneously and without limit. In Thee are found in a supereminent manner the glitter of gold, the beauty of precious stones, the fruits of the fields, the delights of gardens, the magnificence of palaces, the riches of cities, the glory of kingdoms. Everything that is desirable in the world, all that is glorious and honorable and lovable are found in Thee in the highest degree, in the most perfect purity, and all in closest union for ever and ever. Moreover from them is excluded every imperfection that is found in created things.

In Thee are found all delights and pleasures, all that recreates, and all that charms, all consolations and all joys, all beauty and all felicity, all beatitude and the consummation of beatitude. It is from Thee that what is sweet derives its sweetness, what is luminous its splendor, what is living its life, what has feeling its sensation, what moves its power, what has understanding its knowledge, what is perfect its perfection and what is good its goodness.

Thou art the author, the type, the end and the preserver of all perfection. Thou terminatest all infinity; Thou goest beyond every end, Thou limitest every measure, Thou formest whatever is beautiful as well as what is lacking in beauty. But Thou art perfect of Thyself, perfect beyond all conception, perfect from all eternity; possessing in Thyself by Thy simple unity all excellence and all perfection.

Thou art great without quantity; good without quality; infinite without number; beautiful without figure; eternal without time; immense without location; diffused without extension; perfect without multiplicity; and most high without situation. Thou art the centre of the universe to which all things tend by their innate weight; in which they all rest and by which they are all sustained. In Thee are found the attraction of every love; the consummation of every desire, the term of every movement, and the satisfaction of every appetite.

What is not the power of Thy supereminent goodness, since at the least gleam of its rays, and even of its faintest reflection, all creatures rush towards it with impetuosity! For every being in this universe seeks its own special good and tends towards it with all its might. But that good is only a feeble vestige of Thy goodness. It is good

that attracts every creature and excites every movement in the world; and all that moves, acts and works in created things, moves, acts and works only by the desire of something good. But if a faint shadow excites such power, what will not the Truth itself do? I mean infinite beauty and goodness when seen in the light of heaven.

Draw my soul to Thee, O boundless Beauty! Enchain it to Thee by an indissoluble bond and by the eternal fetters of Thy love. For what can I seek or desire outside of Thee who art the plenitude of all good, the source, the end, the sweetness of every good, and who art infinitely better and more excellent than all good? Let me therefore despise everything else, and let me ever think of Thee. Let me love Thee always; let me live intimately attached to Thee, and let me make of Thee my abiding place. Let me love Thee and bless Thee; let all the powers of my soul, and my whole life be consumed in Thy service. Let all passing things be considered vile in comparison with Thee, and let me despise them for love of Thee. Let all that is Thine be dear to me, and be Thou, O my God, dearer than all. According to Thy most exalted pleasure, perfect me in Thy knowledge and Thy love, and translate me entirely into Thee so that I may be of one spirit with Thee. Amen.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Sanctity of God.

"HOLY, Holy Lord God of Sabaoth. All the earth is filled with Thy glory." (Is. vi.) Such is the cry of the Seraphim in that mystical vision in which Thou didst show to Thy prohpet Isaias something of Thy glory, and something of the terrible judgment which befell the Jews. They had filled up the measure of their iniquity, by refusing to recognize Thee when Thou didst come in the midst of them as the Word made Flesh; and now the celestial spirits demand that Thy holiness should be avenged. Three times they claim it with evident reference to the great mystery of the Trinity. For "Thine eyes are too pure to behold evil" says Habacuc (c. i.) "and Thou canst not look upon iniquity." As Thou art Holiness itself, all sin displeases Thee supremely, and hence "Thou wilt destroy all those who work iniquity." (Ps. v and xxvii.) As the darkness is contrary to the light; ugliness to beauty, foulness to purity, obliquity to rectitude, malice to goodness, death to life, so all sin is contrary to Thy sanctity and is held by Thee in horror.

Therefore just as Thou hast a sovereign love

for Thy holiness, so Thou hast necessarily a sovereign hatred for sin, and Thou punishest it by an infinite penalty, unless Thy mercy prevents the sinner, inspires him with contrition and accords him pardon when he repents.

No one ever has been pleasing in Thy sight except by sanctity, and no one endowed and adorned with it has ever displeased Thee. It is sanctity alone that gives children and heirs to Thy kingdom. To it alone was the communication of Thy glory and of Thy beatitude promised and prepared before the ages. We have been "chosen by Thee before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and unspotted in Thy sight in charity" (Eph. i), and capable of the eternal inheritance.

Not Thy power, nor Thy wisdom nor the sublimity of Thy majesty, but Thy sanctity, didst Thou command us to imitate. Thou didst say: "Be holy as I am holy." (Levit. ii). For it is proper that He who is the source of purity and sanctity, who is pure above all purity, holy above all holiness should have ministers who are holy and free from all taint of sin. But whence can we have such purity that we may be worthy to enter into Thy holy presence and to employ ourselves in that which concerns Thy service? We dwell in habitations of clay and in thought and

act are in constant contact with earthly things. If the celestial spirits who are exempt from all corporeal admixture and purer than the heavens, are nevertheless infinitely removed from that purity which ministering to Thee exacts, how far must we be from it who are incomparably beneath them in merit! It is in this that Thy benignity displays itself. Far from rejecting Thy servants because they are sinners and covered with the defilement of earthly things, Thou drawest them to Thee to remove their stains, to illumine their darkness, to sanctify their affections and to make them worthy to appear before Thy face, as far as the restricted capacity of their mortal nature permits. Thou dost not demand of us what is due to the exaltedness of Thy sanctity but what is proportionate to the feebleness of our nature.

Thou art the author, the end, the rule, the model of all holiness; of whom, for whom by the imitation and resemblance of whom all are sanctified in heaven and on earth. The whole universe is like a temple of Thy divinity, consecrated to Thy worship, sanctified by Thy presence, full of Thy glory, adorned with Thine admirable works. In it Thou wishest to be honored, praised and blessed by us in this life and in the life to come.

But the sanctity of rational nature is more sublime, just as Thy presence declares itself with

incomparably greater splendor in spiritual than in corporeal nature. For spirits can draw near Thee and unite themselves with Thee in a more excellent manner; and to know Thee and love Thee is the holiness of spirits. By that knowledge and that love, Thou dwellest in them and they become for Thee a temple more acceptable and more august than this vast machine of the universe which is incapable of feeling Thy presence. By that knowledge and love also they approach Thee, and are bound to Thee by a living tie and they are lost in the abyss of Thy purity. For he who knows passes into Him who is known, and he who loves into Him who is loved. Hence as Thou art a most Pure Act, and if we may so express ourselves, art not only at the summit of spiritual simplicity and purity, and infinitely above material and corporeal things but because also Thou art infinitely simple, infinitely subtile and infinitely spiritual, it is necessary that he who is elevated to Thee and united to Thee and made the same spirit with Thee, should become more simple, more pure and be ever more and more removed from the contagion of lower things. Such is the sanctity with which rational creatures and angels should be endowed to please Thee perfectly.

But O Infinitely Holy God! Thou hast found

a degree of sanctification incomparably higher still when by Thyself and without any created gift Thou dost sanctify one creature by drawing it to Thee in a manner far above what Thou hast done for all others, by uniting it to Thee substantially in the Hypostatic Union. It is thus Thou hast sanctified the Most Blessed Humanity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, so that in Him, along with the plenitude of the Divinity there is found also the plenitude of sanctity.

O admirable sanctification, altogether incomprehensible for all created intelligences! O infinite condescension of the divine goodness which has opened and established for the human race such a source of expiation and holiness! It is from this fullness that we have all received, and what remains suffices to wash away the sins of a thousand worlds and to sanctify an infinite number of souls. Thus by one man all men are sanctified and led back to God, just as by one man they had been separated from God and defiled by sin.

And because we are gross, dependent on the senses, and buried in material things, Thou dost accommodate Thyself to our weakness by sanctifying us through the instrumentality of sensible things and giving us Thy Spirit and spiritual gifts by contact with what is corporeal. O ad-

mirable counsel of the eternal wisdom! From children of wrath Thou makest us children of God, heirs of eternal life, sharers in the divine glory, and Thou accomplishest this by the contact or use of sensible signs, though we deserved to be in every way confounded and condemned to eternal death. O admirable sweetness and goodness that has wrought so great and divine a thing by means of which we are made like unto God and without which we could not please Him; and all that not only by things that are so humble and by instruments so weak, without labor or effort on our part or at least with only a trifling cooperation! O true age of gold and of grace is this time of the New Testament, when earth affords us so many celestial treasures and such an abundance of divine gifts which we can gather with such astounding facility! It is now that the heavens rain down honey and the mountains distill sweetness, and the rivers overflow with milk and wine, and vast storehouses of heavenly treasures are thrown open to mortals so that in a little time and in the easiest possible way they can enrich themselves and be equal to the angels.

Glory be to Thee, benediction and thanksgiving from every creature in heaven and on earth, O Author of all sanctity! Such a blessing can come only from Thee and Thou alone can show Thy

love for man in such a manner. Thou hast given us the Saint of saints, and Thou hast made Him an eternal source of sanctification for "the cleansing of the sinner and of her that was defiled." Thou hast sanctified this Saint of saints by communicating this sanctity to Him, and through Him to all others. It is from Him that all holiness flows into the symbols or sacraments. From the sacraments it pours itself into the soul through the body; from the soul it redounds upon the body and on man's most interior workings, and from what is interior to what is exterior. Thus the whole man is made holy and his entire life is dedicated and consecrated to Thee. He is brought back to Thee who art his beginning, and he rests in Thee who art his sovereign good and last end. It is thus Thou recallest Thy creature to Thee and makest him worthy to abide in Thee.

O God! make me draw unceasingly from that source; make me live in that fountain always and whiten my garments in the Blood of the Lamb! "Wash me yet more from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin; sprinkle me with hyssop," in this fountain of blood of the mystical sparrow and I shall be purified; lave me in that water and "I shall become whiter than the snow."

CHAPTER IX.

The Benignity of God.

O LORD how sweet is Thy spirit and how great is Thy benignity to every creature! For though Thou lackest naught and sufficest fully for Thyself, Thou hast drawn all this universe from nothing so as to make every creature according to his capacity feel the sweetness of Thy goodness and receive the impress of Thy beauty. Not because it was advantageous or useful for Thee didst Thou do all this, but solely for the advantage of Thy creatures, in order that each according to his own little measure might participate in Thy good and taste the fruit of Thy benignity.

It is therefore by Thee that all things have been drawn from the abyss of their nothingness; it is from Thee that they receive the being which is so dear to them, and with that being, its species, its beauty, its desire of good and its aversion from evil, its powers, its functions, its inclinations, its movements, its place in the world, its order, its perfection, its end. Thou givest to each whatever is most suitable for it and what delights it most. Thou accordest to the animal world a manifold

feeling which is both pleasant and good and which is a shadow, and a lower degree of felicity.

Hence all things praise Thee, and with their silent voices intone in Thine honor a sacred hymn wherein they celebrate most clearly Thy power, Thy wisdom, Thy goodness, Thy providence. For "the heavens show forth the glory of God and the firmament declareth the work of His hands. Day to day uttereth speech and night to night showeth knowledge. There are no speeches nor language where their voices are not heard. Their sound hath gone forth to all the earth and their words unto the ends of the world." (Ps. xviii.)

But Thy benignity shines forth, O my God! in a still more incomparable manner in our nature; for Thou hast created us to Thine image and likeness making us bear on our brow the traits of Thy countenance. Thou hast given us understanding, will and memory, to render us capable of Thy divinity, Thy glory and Thy beatitude. Thou hast showered upon us Thy divine assistance, and adorned us with grace in order to help us to merit and acquire those precious possessions. Thou hast deputed Thine angels to defend and direct us. Finally this world with all that it has of riches or goodness, Thou hast made for our habitation and our comfort,

and Thou hast delivered it over to us. Can any greater benefits or any more admirable benignity be conceived? But how our admiration redoubles when we reflect that Thou hast done all this to elevate us to a state that is divine, and to make us participants in Thy beatitude.

By Thy nature Thou possessest the most absolute plenitude of glory and happiness. But in that state Thy benignity could not contain itself. It pours itself out on all creatures to make them share in Thy good. For that reason hast Thou created angels and men who are capable of such an exalted destiny and hast drawn out of nothing all this universe with its riches for the good of man.

Did ever a monarch on this earth share his kingdom with vile and abject slaves? And yet kings and slaves are equal in nature and differ from each other only in their fortune and external things.

As for us we are not only infinitely removed from Thee by the conditions of nature, but are, moreover, in the lowest rank of intelligent creatures. Nevertheless Thou hast loved us more than all others, and Thou hast lavished on us in greater abundance than on any other creatures the riches of Thy divine bounty. It is the characteristic and bent of benignity to lower itself to

what is base, to lift up what is abject, to exalt what is humble and to communicate riches and bestow them more abundantly where the need is most manifest.

"Thou art verily, O my God," as St. Bernard says, "an omnipotent love, a most benevolent power, immutable order, eternal sweetness, creating the world to make it a participant of Thyself; vivifying it to make it feel its Creator; touching it by Thy sweet contact to make it long for Thee; dilating it to fill it with Thyself; justifying it to enable it to merit, inflaming it to make it burn with zeal; fecundating it to make it fruitful; prompting it to righteousness, forming it to benevolence, moderating it to wisdom, visiting it to bring comfort; illumining it to augment its knowledge, guarding it for immortality, encompassing it for protection." (Lib. iv. de Consid.) It is thus that Thou crownest us with Thy mercy and compassionate sweetness; it is thus that Thou fillest us and surroundest us on all sides with good things, so as to make us recognize Thy goodness and Thy love, and to excite us to give love for love.

Thou hast resolved to lead us by love to our first beginning, to unite us to Thy goodness and Thy beauty, and to transform us into Thyself. There was no way more efficacious for this than

the method of love. For love is exstatic and unitive, that is to say, it lifts us out of ourselves and unites us to Thee. We cannot be changed into Thy nature. That would involve the destruction of our being which is a created thing. If it were destroyed we should lapse into nothingness and be incapable of all feeling and of all good; but what nature cannot do, love accomplishes. Thou lightest in us that love in a thousand ways, in order that by its fire we may be melted, or liquified and absorbed in Thee, just as a drop of water in a vat of wine assumes the color and the flavor of wine though the substance of the water remains entire. Love makes the one who loves, to be no longer himself in affection and sentiment. He is changed into the one he loves, so that no difference can be discerned between them. For by love the lover so cleaves to the beloved that as far as in him lies he strips himself of his own being to put on that of the beloved, and to be one and the same as the object of his affections. He thinks only of the good of the beloved, desires only that and labors to augment it. Thus he can say with the Apostle: "I live, but not I. It is Christ who liveth in me." (Gal. ii). Love thus makes a man forget himself, and makes him no longer belong to himself. It causes him to die to himself and live in the object of his love. In

that manner the one who attaches himself to God is made one Spirit with Him. This is the perfection and consummation of sanctity, and eternal life. It is being one with God by the force of love.

It is thus we revert to that primordial type in which we exist from all eternity, not by anything intrinsic to us, but by the force of the idea and the conception of the divine understanding which effects that from all eternity we have lived, labored, and borne the burdens of life in the mind of God although we were nothing in ourselves. Thence, because of God's love for us we passed to our created state, as the form of an edifice passes from the mind of the architect into the condition of actual production, or as the picture passes from the imagination of the painter to his canvas. Thus are we brought back by love and when thus brought back, are united to, and transformed into the idea which God had of us as if the picture were to penetrate the mind of the painter and unite itself intimately to the original type.

Thou comest down and enterest into us by love, to enkindle its fire in us, and by it to lift up our hearts on high and change them into Thee. For as fire by the force of its flame converts everything into itself, so Thou who art a consuming fire convertest everything into Thee by the force

of Thy love so that we may think only of Thee and of what concerns Thee. Let us taste with delight and feel and desire only Thee, and let us speak of naught but Thee. Let that love make us go out of ourselves, so that we may forget all that pertains to us as if we no longer existed. Let us enter into Thee, live in Thee, abide in Thee, and find our delight in Thee. Let this love so possess us that all our life shall be for Thy glory, without fear of any danger, or the refusal of any toil. Let it change into bitterness whatever is worldly, and convert labors undertaken for Thee into sweetness. In our eyes let affronts be glory; poverty, riches; persecutions, prosperity; infamy, fame; sickness, comfort; life, death. For all the woes of this life, supported by Thy love, are better than all the goods of this world. "If we suffer with Him we shall be sharers in the Kingdom." By that love, O God! be our life, our nourishment, our dwelling, our possession, our riches, our glory, our strength, our refuge, our repose, our consolation, our protection, our assurance, our joy, our beatitude. Amen.

CHAPTER X.

The Dominion of God.

"I WILL bless Thee all my life long and in Thy name I will lift up my hands." (Ps. lxii). "Thou art the King of kings and the Lord of lords." (I Tim. vi). "Thou art the Lord of all and there is none that can resist Thy majesty." (Esther xiii).

All things persevere in their course in pursuance of Thy command; all creatures observe the law which Thou hast given, and each one renders Thee homage according to its capacity and power; all confess in unison that Thou art their Creator and their Master. Thou hast sovereign power over all. Thou canst dispose of all, according to Thy good pleasure, and none has the right to demand an account of Thy actions and to say: "Why hast Thou done this?" All the kings and rulers of this world with all their pomp and magnificence, with all their kingdoms and armies, with all their riches and majesty are but worms of the earth, and as nothing in Thy sight. The least of Thy servants who has the honor to serve Thee in Thy heavenly palace is greater than all kings together, and no earthly

potentate is capable of supporting the majesty of the least of those who form Thy court. Everything mortal melts like wax in presence of the splendor of an angel and faints away before him. What then is the glory of Thy majesty which is infinitely greater and more excellent than that of all the angels. "Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised and of His greatness there is no end. Generation and generation shall praise Thy works and they shall declare Thy power." (Ps. cxliv.) The kings and kingdoms of earth will suddenly fall and be reduced to naught but Thy kingdom shall endure for ever and all Thine enemies shall be under Thy feet. The kingdom of the demons and the wicked which now disturbs the world in its oppression of justice and truth shall be utterly destroyed. But Thy kingdom shall keep all under its domination and Thou shalt be all in all.

It is Thou great God! who hast created us all; we are the work of Thy hands; Thou hast shaped and moulded us as the potter his clay. All that we are, all that we have the power of doing, all that we possess, we have received from Thy bounty. It is all Thine. Thou art the maker and the deviser of all. Thou hast drawn all things from naught; from the depths of darkness and the abyss of nothingness hast Thou taken them.

Thou hast suspended them in being, in the light of Thy countenance, in order that all according to their species and forms may shine before our minds and suggest to us Thy majesty. But as by their innate propensity and of themselves they lean towards the nothingness from which they have been drawn, it is not sufficient to have once made them, but it is necessary that Thou shouldst hold them in Thy hand and incessantly support them by that same substantific influence that has produced them, in order that, at each instant they may receive the benefit which they had received when they began to be. The weight which is suspended in the air must be continually sustained. If left to itself it falls to earth in the twinkling of an eye. So all creatures in this universe need to be incessantly preserved in their being and their nature by Thine Omnipotent hand. If Thou withdrawest it, even for an instant they will fall into nothingness and perish suddenly like a shadow that passes away. There is no solidity in bodies or permanency in spirits unless it is received from Thy strength which restrains and holds them intrinsically and prevents they from flowing off like water, or scattering like smoke or vanishing as a vision or a phantom. For Thee, all things are soft and pliable; all things are like a liquid that trickles off and dis-

appears from sight. But at the least sign of Thy will They instantly take the form and figure which it pleases Thee to give. Before Thee neither the mountains nor the rocks are solid, nor is adamant hard, nor the heavens or stars fixed. Nothing can subsist without the perpetual and vivifying influence of Thy light.

Thou art therefore the absolute Master of all things. By Thee they were all created and on Thee they depend. Thou sustainest them lest they fall, keepest them lest they change, restrainest them lest they flow away, and holdest them together lest they perish.

Thou art the deviser, the author, the worker, the preserver, the support, the exemplar and the end of all things. It is by Thee that all things exist so that they may contribute to Thy glory: rational creatures by knowing Thee, loving Thee, honoring Thee, praising Thee; irrational ones by serving for our use, and by their marvellous beauty exciting our souls to admire and to love Thee. And, although we exist only for Thee, and although what belongs to us is destined for Thy glory we are not on that account vile and miserable; for our nature and our greatest good is to serve Thy glory. To serve Thee is to reign; to obey Thee is to go forward to heaven. To serve Thee is better than to rule the whole world.

When the soul is engaged in Thy service, it is exalted, it is united to Thee and because of its closeness to Thee is illumined by Thy light and becomes like Thee. When it is engaged in ruling others it withdraws from union with Thee, descends to inferior things and dissipates itself in its quest of a multitude of things none of which avail for its advantage. Only what is above the soul makes the soul better.

It is a great delusion to make so much of empires and kingdoms, and governments, and prelacies and place, if while ruling others we neglect ourselves; if we exhaust ourselves and trample on right and justice to grasp at a shadow of happiness which shuts us off from our true good and our eternal salvation. For there is nothing that so powerfully withdraws the soul from the love of celestial things; nothing that entangles it so inextricably in those of earth; nothing that gives more unbridled license to commit sin, and exposes us to the danger of remaining in it; nothing that sweeps aside more effectually all salutary counsel; increases more the malice of sin, makes one participate more in the sins of others than do prelacies and principalities. No doubt there are some who accept these charges for other motives than ambition or earthly interests, and who desire to advance the common good and to lead a

greater number of souls to salvation. Such men may expect a rich reward because of the difficulty of their undertaking and the extent of the good they procure; but it is far safer to be hidden in the lowest ranks and to be concerned about one's salvation.

O God! grant me the grace to despise human praise, to flee wordly honors, and to live to be unknown by men. Let it suffice for me to know Thee, and to be known by Thee; to serve Thee and to prefer Thy service to all the empires of the world and all the honors and dignities they can bestow. Let that be my glory and my exaltation; the summit of my ambition, the title and the insignia of my dignity. Let others glory in kingdoms and principalities, in nobility and riches, and whatsoever honors the world may confer. Let all my glory consist in being Thy servant; let all that belongs to me be dedicated and consecrated to Thee and ever employed in Thy service. Let all my thoughts, all my cares, all my efforts, all my purposes tend to Thy honor and have no other end but Thy glory.

CHAPTER XI.

The Providence of God.

O GOD our Father, Thy Providence governs all things; "it reaches from end to end mightily"; from the sublimest height of the heavens to the profoundest centre of the earth, from the highest seraph, to the vilest worm; and in doing so, "it disposeth all things sweetly." Most powerful is the touch of Thy hand by which all things are created and sustained; most sweet is that disposition of things, by which all things are established in their place and rank, directed to their end and given freedom in their individual actions.

It is neither by the fortuitous concurrence of atoms, nor by the violent struggle of the elements, nor by its own action that this world was formed and flashed into the light, but by the counsel and power of Thy Providence. How could a work of such vast intelligence and wondrous art, in which the sublimest intelligence is apparent, in which all is admirably regulated with such order, proportion, beauty and symmetry be performed without design and without wisdom?

Thy Providence has thought out all these

things from all eternity, and has conceived, devised, developed and set them all in their respective places. It determined the species, the measure, the form, the organs, the inclinations of all creatures. It endowed them with their various forces and modes of action and panoplied them in armor for the exercise of their proper functions and defense against their foes. It assigned special ends to each, appointed separate causes for each and provided each with what was best suited to its nature.

From the beginning and before the world was all things were established in Thy Providence. In it the order of time subsists without time, nor can anything new be added to it, and all that can occur in the course of time exists in it before time began. For the power that disposes of whatever is subject to change is that unchanging and unchangeable intelligence in which things existed together before time, although in time they are separated; for time is a series of successions.

There stand the immutable causes of all mutable things; there shine the eternal plans of all that is temporal; there are planted the necessary roots of all that is contingent; there are enforced the laws that are stable, and there are determined the ends of all agents and of all actions. There by a firm, ineffaceable and irrevocable decree, en-

graven on tablets harder than adamant, is recorded the salvation or loss of each according to his deserts. There with their sanctions are the laws about all things; their birth, their life, their progress, their functions, their effects; all the eventualities of life and all the circumstances of death. By these decrees are determined at what time, at what moment, in what place, by what causes, in what order, and in what manner each thing is to exist in this world.

Without the laws of Thy Providence, O my God! nothing is born, nothing dies, nothing acts, nothing moves, nothing is at rest. It directs all things to their ends; it is intrinsically present to them and presides over them; it forms and gives to each its nature and by that nature leads it in its proper functions to its proper end. For what are the natural instincts and inclinations of every creature but a vestige and impress of Thy Providence? Thus it is that all irrational creatures act with such regularity and tend with such order to their respective ends of which they have neither knowledge nor feeling.

What art does not the spider display in weaving its web from its own vitals to spread a net for the flies which it pursues. With what subtlety and industry the bees build their cells! With what skill they form their hexagonal dwellings

in which their young are born and which are at the same time reservoirs of the nectar they gather! With what care they sip the morning dew and suck the juice of the flowers! And how many other marvellous things they perform in that diminutive republic of their hive!

I speak not of the admirable skill of the birds in building their nests in which they find rest and safety, and where their young are hatched and fed and taught. I say nothing of the astonishing things we behold in the silk worm, or of its industry in drawing from its own body the threads which are so finely spun as to be scarcely discernible but out of which it forms the cocoon which encloses it like a tomb from which it emerges months afterwards to live again by a resurrection that is such a striking image of our own future rising from the grave.

I pass over in silence the infinite number of things which both in the animal and vegetable world seem to be done with such intelligence, art and providence that no greater perfection would appear to be possible. Yet this does not come from the skill of these creatures in providing for their needs, but it is Thy Providence, O my God! that leaves its trace and sheds its glow on them, making them act as if they were endowed with a most exalted providence and a perfect art. Thus

it is that all the actions and all the works of nature are really the actions and works of Thy Wisdom and Thy Providence, and all these irrational creatures act as perfectly in conformity with the laws of Thy Providence as if they were endowed with a most perfect knowledge.

Rational creatures of course are to be excepted. They possess a certain providence of their own, and being free, refuse at times to submit to Thy Providence and desire to live according to their own providence and at the caprice of their wills. It is from that source that spring all sins and all sorrows. Nevertheless nothing occurs without Thy Providence, for though rational nature by thus sinning, ceases to act in conformity with the law which Thou hast prescribed, yet on the other hand it does not act outside of the law of Thy Providence, from which it draws the very power that it uses for its own perdition. Thou permittest it to do what it could not do without Thy leave, and Thou assignest certain limits to its action beyond which it cannot go, nor can it do more harm than what Thou permittest. Thou hast completely circumscribed it by the circle of Thy Providence from which there is no escape and which so dominates all creatures that none can throw off its yoke.

Woe to sinners who endeavor to withdraw

from its government and law, and to live according to their own providence, their own pleasure, and the promptings of their free will. When they step aside from the providence which leads to life, they subject themselves to the providence which dooms them to death; when they depart from the order in which sweetness and mercy reign they descend into that of rigor and of justice; when they cast aside the sweet yoke of the divine commandments they bend their necks to the cruel slavery of the damned and of everlasting punishment. O madness that should be wept for with tears of blood! What has fascinated the minds of men to lead them to this excess of folly!

Especially are religious to be pitied who instead of abandoning themselves to the guidance of Providence by the hands of their superiors, wish to live according to their own prudence and wisdom, and are as concerned about themselves as if they had no one to care for them. They withdraw from Thy sweet and infallible Providence by which they would have been directed most surely and most meritoriously to their eternal salvation. For there are various modes in Thy Providence and different orders of governments and graces which are adapted to each individual and designed for each one's salvation. Happy

the one to whom Thou appliest that order of providence and that mode of government which Thou knowest to be for him most salutary and most productive of merits. There is nothing more desirable in this world, nothing more replete with happiness than to pass through the whole course of one's life in conformity with such an arrangement and under such a guidance, because from it proceed an assurance of salvation and an assistance for eternal glory.

For religious there is no form of government more salutary that that in which Thy Providence conducts them during life by the hands of superiors, in the functions, missions, residences, studies and indeed in everything else to which they are assigned. Otherwise why should the Holy Fathers lavish such praise on perfect and blind obedience? Why should so many holy and learned personages practise it so strictly? Why should they proclaim that it is the surest way to salvation? Why should Our Lord Himself have so recommended and counselled it and in so many ways have set us an example of this obedience?

There is no possible doubt that he who abandons himself to Divine Providence and who, so to speak, casts himself in its arms, and permits himself to be governed by it in all things, is following the surest road to salvation; whereas one who

does otherwise and wishes to withdraw from it and to govern himself by his own wisdom is exposing himself to a great danger of falling into the order of that providence in which he will suffer the loss of his soul. Such a manner of life is condemned by all the saints and is considered as imperilling one's salvation, no matter how holy and salutary it may appear. Examples are not wanting of religious who have perished in that way, but there is no instance of any religious who was lost by abandoning himself to Divine Providence as expressed to him by his Superiors, or even of his being worse off for so doing. For how O Lord! could one do better than to yield to what Thou persuadest him to do? Hast Thou not bound Thyself by promise to lead us to salvation? Let me therefore never wander away, but keep me until my last breath in that path which in preference to all others Thou, O my God! and all Thy saints have commended to me.

Never is Thy Providence deceived in what it ordains; for before it determines, it knows what will happen in each supposition and in each disposition of events. It is never foiled in its effect, or in the advantage that is obtainable. For though the order of inferior causes which are only imitations of Thy Divine Providence may go

awry on account of the shiftings and imperfections of such an order, so that the end it aims at is not reached, yet the order and arrangements of Thy sublime Providence never fail of their proper and determined purpose, but invariably attain it. It is true that in the present life, and as long as the term to which all those things tend is not reached, this may not appear. But when this world finally ends and the whirl of human things stops for ever, then the strength of God's Providence will manifest itself; then all the mischances of inferior causes will be seen to have been corrected, and everything established in the unchanging and eternal order. Then shall we see clearly how wisely and sweetly this divine Providence acted in accordance with the nature of each created thing and how everything was administered in the manner that was most conducive to the divine glory and the salvation of mankind.

May this Providence which is so exalted be forever before my eyes, and let me persuade myself that whatever may come either of prosperity or adversity, is ordained by it and depends on it; that thus O my God! I may receive it as a blessing from Thy hand; for nothing is done in time which has not been for most just reasons ordained from all eternity. Let this be my consola-

tion in the hardships of life. When my spirit is troubled and afflicted by the confusion of human things, and the disasters which fall upon the nations, upon religion and upon souls, let Thy Providence give me as my portion, serenity and peace.

Thy Providence, O God! most wisely disposes all things. It will correct perfectly all the faults of creatures and all the infractions of order, and will subject all to an order so profound that the glory of thy Majesty will be resplendent in it and even shine with greater effulgence than if all had preserved the order which had been originally prescribed.

But abandonment to Divine Providence does not prevent the evils and disasters that fall upon our neighbor and especially such offenses as are against the divine majesty from touching us profoundly and overwhelming us with sorrow. It is the condition of this life; and moreover the law of charity should cause us to be so affected, for without this spur, we should with difficulty be urged to fly to the assistance of those who suffer. Nevertheless, in all this, one must not lose sight of moderation. When such things happen and there is no hope of preventing them and when neither our endeavors or prayers avail, it is proper to banish useless sorrow and to console

ourselves, O my God! with the contemplation of Thy Providence.

Let that Providence give me confidence amid the errors of life, assurance in danger, strength in difficulties, patience in adversities, and serenity in facing what the future may have in store. Let it remove from my soul any idle anxiety, by impressing it with the firm belief that whatever happens to me, O my God! comes from the kindness and benignity of Thy Providence. At the same time let it awaken in me such attention and activity as are necessary for dealing with the affairs of life in accordance with their imporportance and with what my state of life requires. The government of Thy Providence, O my God! calls for our studious cooperation; but it forbids and cannot tolerate superfluous care and anxiety for the temporal concerns of this life.

May it please Thy Providence, O my God! to dispose of me and govern me till the end, as it knows it to be expedient for my salvation and Thy glory, either by prosperity or adversity, by honor or ignominy, infamy or praise, abundance or poverty, sickness or health, life or death. I except nothing, I wish to avoid nothing. It is my only desire, and one long formed in my heart. Dispose of me as Thou knowest to be most conducive to my salvation and Thy glory, in order

that, O my God! I may contemplate Thee and admire Thee during all eternity, that I may love Thee, that I may honor Thee, that I may praise Thee, bless Thee and glorify Thee in all things and above all things. Amen.

CHAPTER XII.

The Mercy of God.

"I SHALL sing forever the mercies of God, His great, His prodigious, His ancient and His new mercies, whose number is without end; for "the earth is full of the mercy of God and His mercy is above all His works." (Ps. lxxxviii and xxxii.)

O my Lord and my God! Thy hand has taken us in the beginning from the darkness of nothingness and lifted us into the light of being, giving us our species and an exalted and imperishable nature sealed with the light of Thy countenance and adorned with magnificent gifts that we might have some appreciation and knowledge of Thee and Thy bounty. Thou hast endowed our senses with such power that we can discern and begin to understand the whole material world and all that is contained in it, and we may perceive the evidence of Thy power, of Thy wisdom and of Thy beauty which shine in it so marvellously. Thou hast endowed us with understanding and judgment, to know truth, to distinguish good from evil and to rise from sensible to intellectual things. Thou hast given us memory to recall

the past so that what was once perceived might not float away and compel us to labor anew in order to understand. Thou hast armed us with a will to avoid evil and to follow what is right, to enjoy what we attain, and above all to cleave to Thee by love, and to enjoy Thee our greatest good forever. Of what pertains to the body we need not speak.

Behold to what a height Thou hast made us rise! Behold the first benefits of Thy mercy. They are many, they are inestimable and yet they are but the essays, the outlines of far greater blessings still. Thy lavish benignity did not halt there. It has gone farther yet to perfect its work and to eradicate from our souls the slightest imperfection. To this elevation it has added a second; it has raised us to another degree more eminent than the first, for it has lifted us from the state of nature to that of grace and of filiation which is incomparably more exalted, no matter how perfect and sublime our nature may be. And the reason is that such an honor can be neither the natural appanage even of the most perfect creature, nor be due to any natural dignity with which it is endowed. For no created being can of its nature be a son of God, heir to His kingdom, and the possessor of the Holy Ghost. Yet such prerogatives have been ac-

corded to us by the out-pouring of Thy second mercy. In this degree, Thou hast made us the sharers of Thy secrets. Thou hast made us know the mysteries hidden in Thee from all eternity; Thou hast united us to Thee by supernatural faith, hope and charity, and hast lifted us above all created things. With all human beings it is reckoned among the greatest dignities to be the son of a king. Such a title confers on a man, even if he is personally of little worth, honor and respect, and the whole world proclaims him happy. But how far beyond that is the dignity of one who is a son of God, and an heir to the heavenly kingdom? In the entire universe could there be anything more sublime? It makes us venerable even in the eyes of the angels; and if they themselves were not elevated to the same dignity they might be envious of the honor conferred on us. Hence it is that a single just man who fears God is better in the estimation of God than a thousand who are wicked. (Eccl. xvi.) Whosoever therefore has not this dignity of the sonship of God counts for nothing even if he is endowed with all the gifts and favors of nature.

But the liberality of Thy mercy is not confined within these limits. It has raised man to a third state which is most sublime. It has made him ascend from the state of grace and of initial son-

ship to that of glory and complete filiation. For the gifts of glory are infinitely more excellent than those of grace. The latter Thou accordest in this life, but the knowledge they give is of faith and consequently obscure, but in the light of glory we are endowed with clearness of vision. In one there is the hope and desire of the supreme good; in the other there is possession; in the one fear and apprehension, in the other certainty; in the one expectation, in the other enjoyment; in one battle, in the other victory. Although here below we are really children of God and have a right to the kingdom, nevertheless we do not yet possess it, are not altogether sure of it, and many lose it. For we are not yet free from the miseries of our mortal life; darkness and ignorance still cloud our mind, and our inclination to evil is not irrevocably corrected by the inflexible rule of right. Hence the state of glory is incomparably more excellent and sublime than the state of grace of the present life. To be convinced of it a study of the good that is bestowed on us by each of these states will be amply sufficient.

This, O God, is the third and noblest elevation of our nature; the supreme degree in the communication of Thy gifts. From it are excluded every misery and every imperfection. It is to this sublime degree that the immeasurable sweet-

ness of Thy mercy has destined us in order that in it our mortality may be absorbed, all suffering cease, all want and all imperfection banished, all sorrows assuaged, and every tear wiped away. In order that we, Thy children, O my God, may be made sharers in Thy possessions and riches, we are established in consummated glory. "All things for the elect." That is to say, all things were ordained with a view to bring as many as possible to the glory and participation of the kingdom of heaven.

But after having been elevated to this second degree, instead of making every effort to rise to the third, although we had every help at hand, and could do so with the greatest ease and the greatest joy, yet alas! because of the shameful act of our first father who had, so to speak, the will of all of us included in his own, we withdrew from the order and guidance of Thy mercy, and as a consequence turned away from Thee and plunged into everlasting ruin. Surely it would have been better to have fallen into our primitive nothingness than to have been condemned to eternal fire which was then inevitable. No remedy was left us; no creature could avail to help, for none could offer to Thy justice a proportionate satisfaction for our crime. It seemed all over with our race, and there was no hope of

salvation, when Thou, O God of mercy! touched by our misfortune, didst come again to our aid in such a marvellous and unheard of way that it ought to be for us an eternal subject of wonder. In the excess of Thy love Thou didst vouchsafe that Thy Son who is coeternal and consubstantial with Thee should assume our nature, in order that being a man like us and capable of suffering, He would make reparation for our crime, and in our stead satisfy Thy divine justice by His sufferings and His death.

Taking our nature upon Himself and uniting it to Him by the ineffable bond of the Personal Union, this well-beloved Son is born of a Virgin and enters into the darkness of the world in which He is to be subjected to the miseries of our mortality, such as hunger and thirst, heat and cold, poverty and want, labor and fatigue, outrages and affronts, persecution and calumny, bitterness of soul and torture of body, and finally the cross and death. He is born in a stable like a beggar and a wanderer; He is wrapped in swaddling clothes as an infant; He weeps as mortals weep; He is circumcised as if He were subject to the law; He takes to flight as if He were without power; He lives as if He were unknown; He obeys His parents as if He were their inferior; He lives as an ordinary man until the time came

in which He was to manifest Himself. He is baptized by His servant as if He were a sinner; He fasts in the desert; He is tempted by the devil; He chooses ignorant and rude disciples; He instructs them and leads them step by step in the way of perfection. He journeys over the whole country with them; He teaches the people the way of salvation; He heals the sick, consoles the afflicted, delivers the possessed; sanctifies sinners, dispels the darkness of ignorance, illumines the world, astounds it by miracles, permits some gleams of His Divinity to flash upon men's eyes and exhorts all to reform their life and to be solicitous about their salvation.

Finally after having taught a heavenly doctrine, after having wrought many miracles and given examples of every virtue, He then, in order to consummate the work of our redemption, delivers Himself up entirely as our ransom, and submitting to a most ignominious and cruel death offers His life and His blood for our salvation.

O ineffable mercy! How little right the human race had to it! O pure and gratuitous love! O unhoped for condescension! that the King of Glory should deign to take the form of a slave, give Himself up to such labor and suffering, and finally accept the death of the cross to save not only the vilest of slaves but His bitterest enemies!

Was there ever a father who for the deliverance of his son, or a son for the deliverance of his father, or friend for that of his friend, would have done what God has done for man; the Creator for a creature, the Sovereign Majesty for a worm of the earth?

But His mercy did not stop there. All that He did and suffered for us, all the merits of His life He grouped together and left to us in the sacraments as an inexhaustible treasure from which we might forever draw.

O admirable treasure! O infinite riches by which we may ransom ourselves from eternal death, acquire the kingdom and glory of heaven and gain the possession of God! Finally, to leave nothing undone that His infinite love could accomplish, and to give us a supreme pledge of that love, He left us His Flesh and Blood which He had offered on the cross for our redemption and made them a sacrifice to appease the justice of God, and a food to fortify us for eternal life.

By this act of mercy, O Lord! Thou hast conquered. It alone rises above all that Thou hast done, above all that mind could conceive or creatures hope for. Who that thinks of it can fail to love Thee? Who would not be ready to devote himself and be utterly spent in laboring for Thine honor and Thy service, since in so

many ways Thou hast spent Thyself and more than spent Thyself for our salvation. What are our services compared with the benefits Thou hast conferred on us? And what is our life when measured by what Thou hast done and suffered for us? It is a drop of water to the ocean; a grain of dust to the terrestrial globe. It is far less than all that, for there can be no comparison between the finite and the infinite. What then shall we offer Thee, since the consecration of our life and of all we have is already due Thee under a multitude of titles? If one should owe a prince ten thousand talents that were stolen, and ten thousand more that were borrowed, and another ten thousand for an injury done, and another ten thousand for something bought, and yet had only two small coins to pay it all would the prince be satisfied with such a settlement? Never.

But Thou, O my God! carriest Thy goodness and mercy farther. For although we are in so many ways and to such an extent Thy debtors yet as soon as we employ the two pieces of money that we have: our soul and body, Thou art satisfied and exactest no more. And yet even in that we afford no benefit to Thee but are serving our own interests. For to serve Thee is to reign, and if we gave Thee all that we have and consecrated

ourselves absolutely to Thy service, and had never a thought but of Thee, we would be securing the greatest possible advantage for ourselves.

Woe to those whose blindness prevents them from seeing these marvels! Illumine my darkness, O God of Light! that I may know the magnitude of Thy mercies and the multitudinous evidences of Thy love, and after having seen that Light, let me esteem and appreciate it at its proper value, as far as the darkness of this life may permit. May the vision of these things be ever present to me, in order that my soul, amazed and enraptured by so much benignity and by so many benefits, may be inflamed with the fire of Thy love and devote and consecrate itself entirely to Thee. May all my thoughts, may all the powers of my being, may all my preoccupations and all the actions of my life be for Thy glory. May all the strength of my body and soul be spent in Thy service so that I, even I, may offer something to Thy love and be found not altogether ungrateful in Thy divine presence.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and let all that is within me bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all that He hath done for thee. He forgiveth all thy iniquities; healeth all thy diseases; redeemeth thy life from destruction; crowneth thee with mercy and com-

passion; and satisfieth thy desires with good things. Thy youth shall be renewed like the eagles." (Ps. cii.)

And do ye also O Angels, Archangels, Principalities, Virtues, Dominations, Thrones, Cherubim and Seraphim bless the Lord! Bless Him, unite your praise and exalt Him, because He has exercised His mercy towards us. May the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that is in them, praise and exalt forever the greatness of His name. To Him be honor and praise and thanksgiving from every generation, for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Justice of God.

"WHO knoweth the power of Thy wrath? What terror will measure Thy vengeance?" (Ps. lxxxix.) Who can properly appreciate the magnitude and the multitude of the punishments Thou hast prepared for sinners to be meted out to them by Thine omnipotence in due time? As Thy mercy is infinite so is Thy justice. It shows itself in numberless ways against sinners, not only in the future but in the present life; and although now mercy is chiefly exercised, nevertheless justice is at times exacted, so that men may learn to fear Thee. If sweetness does not avail to touch their hearts, the severity of Thy judgments may strike them with alarm.

Thou didst manifest Thy justice and Thine anger against sin when for a single transgression Thou didst precipitate myriads of angels into hell though they were incomparably superior to men, and didst condemn them to eternal torment without any hope of pardon. Nor was Thy justice stayed either by the vast number of those who were punished, or by the excellence and beauty of

their nature, or by their marvellous intelligence endowed though it was with such clear and penetrating knowledge. Thou didst not take into account the praise and benediction and gratitude and honor and glory that Thou wouldst have received from them for all eternity if Thou hadst pardoned their sin. Notwithstanding the loss of this masterpiece of Thy hands and the glory it would have procured for Thee hadst Thou forgiven it, Thou didst prefer to suffer such a loss rather than pardon that single sin.

Thou didst again display Thy justice and Thy wrath against sin in the punishment of our first parents, not only by depriving the whole human race of its original justice and the happiness of the state in which Thou didst create it, but by condemning it to innumerable miseries and to death itself. Thy wisdom foresaw that in consequence of this punishment an infinite multitude of men would be lost and that scarcely one out of a hundred would be saved, and yet on account of this first sin of our parents, Thou didst permit all that to fall on their posterity. Who is not startled when standing before this abyss of Thy judgments? Verily Thou art the great and terrible God, infinitely exalted and superexalted above all creatures, all-sufficing of Thyself for all praise and glory and happiness, and needing

neither our service nor our praise, nor the service of the angels, but requiring only one thing: obedience to Thy will.

Thou didst also show Thine anger against sinners when in punishment of a deluge of sin, Thou didst send the deluge of the waters which destroyed the whole human race with the exception of eight who were to repeople the world. Thus didst Thou purify the earth which had been made foul with crime. Thy wrath again shone forth when a rain of fire and brimstone poured down from the heavens and utterly destroyed Sodom and the adjoining cities with all who dwelt therein, thus giving even in this life an image of the eternal fire prepared for sinners after death.

Four hundred years afterwards, Thy wrath was exercised against the Egyptians who were oppressing Thy people by a cruel and unjust slavery. When both prince and people persisted in their obstinancy in spite of the mysterious and terrible plagues with which they were stricken, Thou didst make the waters of the Red Sea to engulf them.

Thou didst not even spare Thy people whom Thou hadst chosen from all the nations of the world. In pursuance of Thy mandate, the earth opened under the feet of those who rebelled, fire

falling from heaven consumed them, and the sword exterminated them. For their sin of murmuring they were condemned to wander for forty years in the barren sands and frightful solitudes of the desert; and finally during the time of the Judges, Thou didst permit them on account of their sins to be six times vanquished by their enemies, dragged into slavery and subjected to every kind of misfortune.

Finally to punish its sins Thou hast often chastised the human race by pestilence, famine, war, tempests, floods and earthquakes. For as there is no place where sin is not committed, it is just that in all places sinners should be scourged by suffering in order that smitten by Thy hand they may return to the ways of wisdom and fulfil their duty to Thee.

Thou punishest sin not only by exterior calamities, but still more by those which are interior and spiritual, as when Thou withdrawest from sinners Thy light and the protection of Thy grace, and permittest them to be driven by the demon into all kinds of wickedness. That is one of the most dreadful chastisements because it is next to eternal damnation. Thus for many thousands of years Thou didst permit the Gentiles, that is to say, almost the whole world, to enter upon the paths of iniquity, and didst allow the devil as the

prince and god of this world to occupy Thy kingdom, and to be honored and adored by men as a veritable deity. In the same way Thou didst cast away Thy people on account of their crimes. Because they rejected the love of truth and put Truth itself to death Thou didst reject them by the withdrawal of Thy grace, and didst permit the demons to hold them enthralled in the slavery of intellectual blindness and error. Thus also because of their crimes and chiefly because of their heresies Thou didst abandon several Christian realms and didst deliver them over to infidels or devils.

Such are the judgments of Thy justice; such are the wages meted out to the wicked for their desertion of God. Those who abandon Thee and Thy doctrine are abandoned by Thee, and delivered over to the deceits of the devil so that they mistake light for darkness and darkness for light, rejecting good as if it were evil and embracing the greatest evil as if it were the greatest good. Yet although this is the most awful punishment that can be inflicted in the present life, nevertheless as it is not visible and not felt, no attention is paid to it, and instead of being regarded as a chastisement, it is esteemed as a benefit. But that is only a proof of the extremity of the misfortune.

It is by these and other punishments that Thou afflictest sinners in this life and showest Thy wrath and Thy justice. But who can explain the sufferings, the afflictions, and the miseries that Thou hast reserved for sinners in the life to come, when Thou loosenest the reins of Thine anger, and no longer restrainest it by Thy mercy. There are they imprisoned in the deepest dungeon where everything inspires horror; there they are plunged in a pool of fire and brimstone; there the heaped up bodies will burn as dry wood in the midst of the sulphurous lake; there, will be weeping and gnashing of teeth because of the fierceness of the suffering inflicted and the inability to support it; there under the form of frightful monsters, the demons enwrapped in a body of fire will exercise their cruelty on the unfortunate damned; there will be felt in the body the extremest pain, and in all the senses extremest agony; there the soul will be overwhelmed by incomprehensible sadness and incomprehensible despair, when it considers the infinite loss that it has suffered, the awfulness of its misfortunes, and above all the eternity during which all these losses and all these woes will be suffered without the shadow of any alleviation or appeasement of pain. O Eternity! Infinite good for the blessed; infinite evil for the reprobate! What a dreadful

excess of pain, what horrible and intolerable torture it would be to burn in a blazing furnace even for a day. What would it be for a year or a hundred years; or a thousand years; or a hundred thousand years! What horror would seize our soul if we were condemned to burn for a hundred thousand years! But if it is for all eternity, the punishment becomes infinitely greater and infinitely worse and engenders in the soul an agony incomparably more appalling. What then must that suffering be in itself which is incomparably greater than a hundred thousand years in the torture of fire?

Who can meditate on these sufferings without a shudder? To avoid them and to reach a place where they are no longer possible who would not despise from the depths of his soul the riches, pleasures and honors of this world? Who would not enter upon the narrow path of salvation? Who would not consider it as the uttermost limit of madness, to expose himself for earthly and passing things to the danger of measureless and everlasting woe?

I beg Thee, O Lord, by Thine infinite goodness and mercy, by the merits and mysteries of Thy Sacred Humanity to preserve me from such madness. Illumine my mind with Thy light and the salutary wisdom of the elect, that by its fire, I

may know more clearly the grievousness of sin which deserves such frightful punishments. Make me often consider, O my God, with all the strength of mind the misfortune of the lost; let me thoroughly understand for the sake of my salvation what a boundless ocean of malice there is in each deadly sin, that overwhelms both soul and body in such an ocean of misery; and finally, let me endeavor with all possible care to avoid it, and to strive to please Thee. It is thus that I shall flee from the greatest evil and labor efficaciously for the greatest good.

CHAPTER XIV.

God Our Last End.

"O YE sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart? Why do you love vanity and seek after lying?" (Ps. iv.) The honors, riches and pleasures you seek so ardently are all vanity. Yet to obtain them you employ all the resources of your soul by which you could have attained solid and everlasting happiness.

"Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity," says Ecclesiastes, and he had tried everything and in the light of the highest intelligence had contemplated everything. Rightly he calls them *vanity* because they are of no avail for the end we have been appointed to reach, and they are often an obstacle. They are *lies* for they promise happiness and bring only misery. Those who seek such things are truly described as the *sons of men* for their minds are blinded, their cupidity is senseless and their labor useless and pernicious. Not for such things have we been created and placed in the world; not in them is good or rest to be found. They are earthly and fleeting and can neither perfect nor satisfy the soul whose nature is heavenly and eternal, whose capacity is

boundless and whose dignity is next to that of the angels.

What then is our real good? Listen to the Royal Prophet who asks: "Who showeth us good things? The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us. Thou hast given gladness in our heart." (Ps. iv.) The light of faith can show us this good and the way to reach it, and the knowledge of it fills the heart with incredible joy. For what is more desirable than to know our sovereign good and our last end, and to be surely treading the pathway that conducts us to eternal life. Without that knowledge all other knowledge is useless and deserves not the name of wisdom.

The ancient philosophers lacked that knowledge and hence they were dissipated in their thoughts and drew no profit from their labors and researches. "For who knoweth the thoughts of God if it be not the Spirit of God, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God (I Cor. ii)? By the Spirit has this hidden counsel of God been revealed to us. "May the heavens and the earth and the sea and all they contain, bless Thee, O my God! may they praise and exalt Thee for ever and ever." (Dan. iii.) For before all ages we were Thy care, and in the first counsel of Thy Trinity Thou didst form in our

regard a design of infinite benignity. It was to make us sharers in Thy divinity and in all Thy possessions and in all Thy joy. Who would not be ravished with astonishment in contemplating such benignity and sweetness? Who would have ever been able to hope for or divine it? But such was the pleasure of Thine infinite goodness whose nature is to pour itself out and communicate itself in ineffable ways.

Alone in Thine eternity Thou wert in the enjoyment of Thine own goodness, and lacking nothing, for Thou art the infinite good and most sufficient for all happiness. The delight of the sweetness of association and friendship was not wanting. Thou didst find it in the Trinity of Persons; for between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit there exists a sovereign society, a sovereign love, a sovereign communication of all good, of all joys, of all thoughts. Thou didst not therefore need the society of creatures. That could not be of advantage to Thee. Yet nevertheless yielding to the inclination of Thy goodness, Thou didst wish to create us and to elevate us to the participation of Thy possessions and of Thine infinite felicity.

Between Thee and us there is an infinite distance not of place but of nature. Being infinitely exalted above all creatures, Thou rulest them

from an infinite height. Between us and Thee are the infinite degrees of rational nature which Thou in Thine infinite wisdom and power dost keep as Thou hast disposed them. Yet nevertheless the power of Thy goodness is so great, that Thou canst elevate our soul above all created beings and, above all that may be created, in a most wonderful manner without assistance unite us to Thee by vision, by love and by beatitude.

O admirable, happy and glorious union in which, O my God, are found at the same time our greatest good and Thy greatest glory! For by it we are made sharers in the divine goodness and the divine joy; and by it Thy Divinity shines in greatest splendor outside of Itself in the mirror of the created spirit, as within, It shines in the contemplation of Itself. In other created things, as in the structure of this universe and the different degrees of being, there are without doubt certain feeble rays of Thy Divinity, by the help of which we somewhat surmise Thy power, Thy wisdom, Thy goodness; but in our soul thus elevated and united to Thee the whole plenitude of Thy Divinity glows in Its splendor, and in It Thy beauty is reflected. And although It is one, It is nevertheless multiplied in such a marvellous manner that there would seem to be as many divinities as there are blessed spirits.

That union of our soul with God is made the supreme aim of our desires. By it all good flows to us: power, because we shall be kings and sons of God; wisdom, for we shall possess and contemplate the very source of wisdom; holiness, for that burning love with which we shall be inflamed is supreme holiness and the perfection of every virtue; riches, because the kingdom of heaven and all its wealth belongs to us; honors, because we shall be received and honored as sons of God; beauty, because our body shall shine as the sun and our soul like the Divinity; joys and delights, for we "shall be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house and shall drink of the torrent of Thy pleasure" (Ps. xxxv); peace and security, for nothing without or within can ever trouble or sadden or disturb us; and what is greatest of all, there is the absolute certainty that this union with God will be eternal.

Therefore let this union in which are found our greatest good, and God's greatest glory be ever nearest to our heart. Let us long for it and let us place it above all created things. Let the possessions of this life, no matter how great they may appear, become vile in comparison with it, and let all else without exception be reputed as nothing. Let all our thoughts, our cares, our labors tend to that divine union and let our soul never know rest except in it.

But as so great a good is far beyond our strength, we have recourse to Thee, O most benignant God! It is solely by Thine infinite bounty that from all eternity Thou hast destined us to that sublime state. To conduct us thither and to put us in possession of it, Thou hast created the world, assumed our flesh, died on the cross, and given us other innumerable testimonies of Thy love. Continue Thy benignity towards us; interrupt it not, nor diminish it because of our ingratitude, our negligences, and the other blots that are the sad consequences of our frailty. Augment it rather, being mindful of Thine eternal purpose and of all the mercies Thou hast heaped upon us to this day. Illumine our souls with the light of Thy Holy Spirit; let it make us know the vanities and perils of this world, by the deceits of which so many perish, and let it reveal to us the excellence and the holiness of the eternal good that Thou hast prepared for us in Thee. Keep all this ever before our eyes and let it exercise on our souls a profound impression which will urge us in spite of all transitory things to the love and the conquest of all that is eternal. Let our desires, and our longing never cease; let our efforts ever increase until the last moment of our life; and then by Thy grace, make us be found worthy of Thy kingdom

and of the eternal rest in which all the saints, united with Thee who art their last end and sovereign good, will find by the vision and by love, unutterable delights and the supreme accomplishment of all their desires.

FINIS.